Gandhi Memorial College Of Education Bantalab Jammu

JOHN KEATS

SELECTED POEMS

H. GHOSH

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Narain's University Series of English Literature, No. 40

JOHN KEATS

SELECTED POEMS

Edited With

General Introduction, Text, Paraphrase, Critical Appreciation, Notes, and University Questions & Answers)

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. KEATS AND ROMANTICISM (1798-1832)

Romanticism Defined

It is not easy to define romanticism. Like many other literary terms, this word has been used in different ages in widely different senses. Goethe placed it against Classicism : "Romanticism is disease ; Classicism is health." Stendhal described "Romanticism as art of the day (modern) and Classicism, the art of the day before (past). In fact, all good art is first Romantic, then it becomes Classical." Heine and Beers describe it to be the re-awakening of the Middle Ages. To some, Romanticism is an expression of emotion against reason. Surrealists and some modern scholars regard Romanticism as "a literature of the less conscious levels of the mind." According to F.L. Lucas, Romanticism results from a dominance of impulses from the *Id* (the primitive impluse), Classicism from our impulse of super-ego (the impulse which says it is pleasant but wrong) and realism from the impulse of Ego (it looks pleasant but it is a snare and delusion).

Phrases such as "revindication of imagination", "rehabilitation of emotion", "revindication of senses," "accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision" are also used to express Romanticism. Lascelles Abercrombie says that "Romanticism is a withdrawal from outer experience to concentrate upon inner experience." Victor Hugo calls it "liberalism" (democrate spirit) in literature. Watts-Dunton observes, "Romanticism is Renaissance of wonder." Walter Pater regards Romanticism "as strangeness added to beauty." The essential elements of romantic spirit, according to Walter Pater, are "curiosity and the love of beauty," the beauty which is to be won by strong imagination out of things likely or remote. But Pater's definition is incomplete in the sense that all poetry is addition of strangeness to beauty.

In the words of Prof. Cazamian, "The romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision, and, in its turn, stimulating or directing such exercise. Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the romantic literature." According to Compton-Rickett, "Romanticism, generally speaking, is the expression in terms of art of sharpened sensibilities, heightened imaginative feeling, and although we are concerned only with its expression in literature, Romanticism is an imaginative point of view that has influenced many art forms and has left its mark also on philosophy and history." In the

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words of W. J. Long, the poetry of Romanticism is characterized by "the protest against the bondage of rules, the return to nature and the human heart, the interest in old sagas and medieval romances as suggestive of a heroic age, the sympathy with the toilers of the world, the emphasis upon individual genius, and the return to Milton and the Elizabethans, instead of to Pope and Dryden for literary models."

Romanticism was also a return to Nature. It was "glory of lake and mountains, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of attic marble." All these springs of the poet's inspiration and the artist's joy began to flow, not at once but in prolonged unordered succession and not within a limited area, but throughout the Western Europe, and pre-eminently in Germany, England and France. To quote G. H. Mair, "One notes in the (romantic) authors an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility ; the mind at its countless points of contact with sensuous world, and the world of thought seems to become more alive and alert. It is more sensitive to fine impressions, to finely graded shades of difference. Outward objects and philosophical ideas seem to increase in their content and their meaning and acquire a new power to enrich the intensest life of the human spirit. Mountains and lakes, the dignity of the peasant, the terror of the supernatural, scenes of history, medieval architecture and armour, mediaeval thought and poetry, the arts and mythology of Greece all become springs of poetic inspiration and poetic joy."

Four Major Meanings of "Romanticism"

It stands for several things together. It has been associated with the word 'romances' of the medieval period which had a certain feeling of remoteness and a far-away atmosphere particularly regarding the landscape ; feats of daring and bravery, chivalry ; belief in supernatural charms and magic ; woman worship, etc. Hence, originally the word "romantic" signified the qualities in these semi-historical cycles, such as, "far-fetched and opposed to fact." In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the term connoted "wild, extravagant and improbable". The diarists, Evelyn and Pepys, use it in this sense. Later in the eighteenth century the term 'romantic' was used in the sense of 'Gothic' *i.e.*, "irregular, wild and fantastic."

It is strange that the poets now known as 'romantic poets', such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats, did not call themselves 'romantic'. This term was attached to them later in the nineteenth century itself. Wordsworth considered romantic as something "extravagant, excessive, and even undesirable."

In modern English usage generally four distinct meanings of the term are found—(1) As opposed to commonplace : imaginative, remote from experience and everyday life, visionary, expressing vague longings away from the ordinary ; (2) As opposed to probable : fanciful, fantastic, pertaining to a dreamy fairyland ; (3) As opposed to

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the literal : mystic, symbolic, unseen ; and (4) As opposed to formal : grand, picturesque, passionate, irregularly beautiful.

Characteristics of Romanticism (Romanticism vs. Classicism)

The term 'Romanticism' has generally been understood and interpreted in terms of characteristics it has or in contrast to 'Classicism'. If classicism suggests objectivity, outer experience, universal values, feeling of broad acceptance of the existing order, sense of detachment, preference for quiet, poise and conformity, romanticism suggests subjectivity, inner experience, personal values, feeling of indequacy, excessive egoism (including pessimism), impulse to adventure, spirit of revolt, thirst for freedom, etc.

Influences on the Romantic Poetry

The romantic poetry of the Romantic Revival was influenced by medievalism, the Greeks, especially the Platonists and the monists and pantheists. But more than these it was influenced by German transcendentalism, the social philosophers, such as, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, and the French Revolution. The transcendentalists, such as, Hegel and Kant taught that Man was governed by Fate and Necessity. They believed that there was a power that co-ordinated and gave life to the activities of the senses and their perceptions. They laid emphasis on the transcendental powers of the Mind. In America Emerson, in Germany Kant and Hegel, in England Coleridge, were the chief exponents of this new intellectualism.

The Romantic Revival

The history of romanticism is quite old. Aristotle and Plato were romantic ; Rousseau and Victor Hugo were also romantic. The Medieval romances were also romantic. The Elizabethan Literature was truly romantic. All the major qualities enumerated in the preceding paragraphs were present in the literature of the Elizabethans.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there was a new dawn. The teachings of Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu and the French Revolution heralded a new age. Once more a new vista opened out before imagination. A new territory of human life was discovered. "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality" sounded like the tolling of a bell ushering a golden age. Mother Earth was discovered anew. Under these new impulses was revived in literature something of that hopefulness, that sense of wonder and mystery, that restlessness and curiosity, etc, that characterized the Elizabethan literature. Not only the spirit, but also the forms and subjects of the Elizabethan literature, were revived again between 1798 and 1824—the sonnet, the lyric, the pastoral, the blank verse drama, the Spenserian stanza, the ballad. The same fullness of imagination, richness of language, vastness of conception, lyricism and picturesqueness, whtch pervaded the great Elizabethan works, is to be found in romantic poetry. Hence, the period between 1798 and 1824 is known as the period of "the Romantic Revival of Poetry."

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Romantic Revolt

Historically, the Romantic Revival of Poetry was a revival of the Elizabethan traditions and a revolt against the neoclassical traditions of the eighteenth century. The classicism of the age of Anne was of a special type. "It was more Latin than Greek, and more French than Latin." The literary taste of Europe was fashioned by France. Malhebe and Boileau, the French critics, insisted upon cultivating simplicity, clarity, propriety, decorum, moderation and, above all good sense. They applied the precepts of Aristotle, as codified by Hoarce and Longinus, to modern conditions. German and English literature was under the influence of Moliere, Racine and Boileau for over a century. English authors like Waller, Cowley and Etherege had come under their influence during Charles II's exile in France.

The eighteenth century literature was classical in its self-restraint, its objectivity and its lack of curiosity. It was not simply a literature of the world but of this world, of high life, fashionable society, the court and the town, the saloons and clubs, coffee-houses and ombre parties. "The proper study of man is mankind," said Pope. But it was mankind in England, and in London. And in London, too, this literature confined itself to high society and to 'my lords and ladies gay'. It was pre-eminently a social and urban poetry. Its interest was centered on civilization. The writers of Queen Anne's age believed that wit originates in intellect and its true medium is prose. Literature became "a polished mirror in which gay world saw its own grinning face." Pope instructed, "Follow nature" (human nature of Londoners), and to follow nature observe the rules, imitate the ancients :

> *"Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem*
> *To copy Nature is to copy them."*

The primary concern of the classical authors was with morals and manners.

But the Romantics revolted against all these. The poetic diction was the first casualty at the hands of Romantics. Wordsworth exposed the hollowness of the classical manner and made a plea for a return to simple, unaffected and direct speech. He and Coleridge removed the sphere of poetry from social to philosophical reflection. For moral generalizations they substituted "introspective analysis of the impressions of the individual mind." Literature became personal instead of being social. Shelley and Byron were great revolutionaries. Literary characters are frequently solitaries; haunted like the Ancient Mariner who must tell his tale; self-exiled like Childe Harold; woe-begone like the Knight in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', steering strangely to death like Alastor. The Classical poet lived in the present; the Romantics looked before and after and pined for what was not. Passion and emotion was reinfused into poetry. The poet of the early nineteenth century revolted against the narrow civic sense and parochialism of the classical school. For Pope, the proper study of mankind was man in London. The Romantic's love of man

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embraced the whole human race. 'Liberty, equality, fraternity was their slogan. In theory, as well as in practice, they were firm believers in cosmopolitanism. Byron died for a country to which he had no national attachment; Shelley was more at home in Italy, and Keats 'was of no nation whatever'.

Hence, Romantic poetry is known as the poetry of Romantic Revolt too. All the characteristics of ronantic poetry mentioned above predominate in the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats. They were contemporaries or near contemporaries.

Contribution of the Romantic Poets

The romantic poets of England experimented with a new type of diction. They rejected the fashions of the metaphysical poets on the one hand and of the psuedo-classical poets on the other hand. In place of urbanity, artificiality and accuracy, polish and refinement of the poetry of the poets of the Age of Pope, they wanted to express the superntural in the natural way, and the natural in a supernatural way. They provided music and sweetness to poetry. The developed the concept of pure poetry, a poetry free from the cumbersome didacticism and moralism. The made poetry a thing of dreams and visions too. They showed how poetry could be exploited to express common things in an uncommon way ; they added strangeness to beauty ; they enriched imagination, and exploited Nature as a rich source of joy and imagery. They further made poetry a vehicle of expressing individual joy and sorrow. They freed the Goddess of Poetry from the fetters of matter-of-factness, and took her towards the hills and the mountains, the fields and pastures, the rivers and the lakes, the oceans and streams.

2. POETRY IN KEATS'S AGE

Already, towards the end of the eighteenth century, a current of *sentimentalism* is noticed along with that of reason guiding the conduct of life, and influencing literature in general. Literature and, particularly, poetry are transformed by the gradual appearance of themes based on sentiment. The first appearance of sentiment is in the sentimental comedies of the last decades of the eighteenth century. Gradually, sentimentalism attacks poetry also. In fact, from the third to the eighth decade, a great number of authors are writing in verse from impulses that are for the most part rational, but in which there is an admixture, in various proportions, of the sentimental spirit. Poets, who hesitantly adopt sentimentalism in their poems, are minor ones like Akenside and William Falconer, etc. The growth of the poetry of sentiment proceeds by successive advances.

The first element comes into prominence, is *the emotional theme of nature*. The instinctive naturalism of the English mind was never completely neutralized by classical influences. Therefore, even in the rather dry and urbane atomosphere of Augustan poetry do we hear

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faint romantic echoes. Poets, like Thomson with *The Seasons*, John Dyer with *Grongar Hill*, Akenside wite *The Pleasure of Imagination*, Edward Young with *The Complaint*, or *Night Thoughts*, express a romantic love of country-scenes, pastimes and occupations, a proneness to sentimental and melancholy thinking a humanitarianism in their verse. Bishop Percy leads *the ballad-revival* which is in harmony with a revived taste in England for the relics of the past monuments, legends, and works of art, as an aid in the development of imaginative perception and emotional experience. Sentimentalism, besides satisfying the senses, is attracted towards relics, for the enjoyments, of which imagination is required. This longing for an enjoyment of the past is the natural result of dissatisfaction with the extremes of the existing artificiality and rationality both in life and literature. Therefore, *Gothic times and Middle Ages, a love for antiquated national architecture, past legends and popular traditions, old national writers, Chaucer, Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare and a love of exoticism, i. e., distant and strange foreign lands. peoples and settings are revived.* Northern and Scandinavian ideal comes to oppose Latin and French influence. All these themes form an organic whole, the psychological substance to an incipient Romanticism.

William Collins with his *Ode to Liberty*, his odes on the *Passions* and *On the Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, and, mainly, his *Ode to Evening*, strikes "a romantic chord in an age of classicism." Thomas Gray, also a transitional poet of a primarily disciplined talent, scrupulous artist, conscientious and delicate in the extreme, undoubtedly produced laboured art. But his poetry, in spite of its classical manner and form, abounds in all the seeds of the coming Romantic age. It is wholly animated by emotions, thus tending to rejuvinate a rather cold classical literature. By mastering and sublimating emotional impulses in a sober form, his poetry approximates, both in spirit and in letter, to an ideal classicism, one that would represent discipline without impoverishment of the real beauty of art. His greatest work, *The Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, with strong notes of tenderness and melancholy, his active imagination, his humanitarian and democratic spirit, etc., is essentially romantic in spirit and foreshadows of Romanticism. Similarly, Goldsmith and Cowper, although burdened with the classical diction of the 18th century, were essentially pioneers of the Romantic Movement.

The last thirty years of the eighteenth century, 1770 to 1799, constitute a separate period in the study of English literature. In the course of the long transition which is finally to lead to Romanticism, the period of the aforesaid pioneers preceding these thirty years form the first stage. These thirty years form, as it were, the second stage. The former was an age of feeling and sentiment. The latter is an age of imagination, and it is a natural transition from an age of feeling to one of imagination. In the latter, there are stronger and more numerous signs of Romanticism than in the former and, therefore, it can

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properly be called the pre-Romantic period. Poets of this period strike a stronger note of imaginative emotion. They show an increased curiosity for all that is strange and striking in the past and the distant, andthis curiosity is co-mingled with sentiment and imagination. There is also in evidence a keen desire for spiritual. relief. All these symptoms make their appearance as a protest against the preceding age of dry reasoning and for the fulfilment of the *cravings of the long subdued* emotional life of the people. The past is revived in the hope that it will be certainly different from the present and, therefore, a very welcome change. This renascene of imaginative emotion consisted above all in the literary and artistic discovery of the Middle Ages.

One distinctive feature of this renascene of imagination is the part played by Scandinavian influence through Northern mythology, as in Percy's *Reliques*. Soon the effect of Scandinavin poetry is overcome by the stronger prestige of Celtic models in the form of the popular Ossianic tales and Gaelic legends whose influence is evident, for example, in the Scottish poetry like Macpherson's *Ossian*, in musical epic-prose. Percy's *Reliques* for the first time, brought the essential features of popular poetry of ancient days (the ballad form) to the notice of the educated reader. They rejuvinated the sensibility of a public grown tired of the false refinement of diction and intensity of language. These *Reliques* showed a spontaneity full of energy, an archaic note and simple style of expression. Another romantic spirit of this time is a youngster, *Thomas Chatterton*, the reviver of the Gothic past. In certain respects, he is the most romantic poet of his age, a mind in revolt from its time. He died at eighteen by poisoning himself.

The feeling for nature, which has been growing stronger and stronger since the preceding period, is closely connected with this renascene of imagination. The beauty of the countryside is now tending to become a popular subject in literature.

In 1789, Europe witnesses the 'French Revolution'. The outbreak of this revolution is immediately felt through the neighbouring countries. Consequently, from 1789 to 1815, the drift of European literature and thought is in certain respects determined in relation to France, whose stormy fate promotes amongst the governments, nations and writes diverse reactions of sympathy, fear and hostility. England is shaken by the storm of events in France. At first, she is torn between a feverish admiration and a hatred mingled with terror, and is afterwards completely united in the national struggle against Napolean. France is the pole of attraction or repulsion around which English intellectual life largely tends to group itself during this period. The mental outlook of political theorists, polemical writers, novelists, dramatists and poets derive inspiration from the actual beginnings and successive rise and fall of the French Revolution from 1780 to 1800. From about 1800, the moral and imaginative stir caused by the great revolution enters into a new literature as one of its elements, and

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combines with the diverse impulses which give birth to and mature the Engish Romanticism.

The advocates of the revolution are mostly generous enthusiasts, guided by sentiment and swayed by imagination. The Conservatives are opposed to the Revolution. In matters intellectual they apply self-control and show a cold and calm attitude. They are fond of irony ; and their satires in verse are naturally cast in the classical mould. But their anger is equally inclined to find expression in vehement tones. The greatest of them all, Edmund Burke, advocates the doctrine of traditional order through a powerful and intuitive imagination set off by a language of fiery eloquence. The great revolutionary drama appeals to the whole of human nature, and calls all its rival faculties into play. It rouses souls to a pitch of enthusiasm of tears them by an inner conflict. It stimulates thought and furnishes works of littrature with varieties of subject-matter.

William Mason and James Beattie are in one way the most representatives of the pre-Romantics, because in their poetic works tradition and the future are closely intermingled. With Robert Burns and William Blake, the vigour of their personality at last triumphs over literary convention. The former rediscovers the spontaneous truth of the heart ; the latter spiritualizes the language, melting its hardened crust, and so restores its former purity. Unlike Wordsworth, Blake was not destined to be the fuonder of a school of poetry. But in the full sense of the term, he was the first of the Romanticists. In the works of Burns, *e.g.*, *The Jolly Beggars* and *Holy Willie Prayer*, etc., are to be found the inner elements of Romanticism : personal effusion, sensibility, a keen love of nature, a wealth of imaginative fancy, a sympathetic interest in the poor and the animals. But he lacks the feverishness of the heart or of the head, and the absolute melancholy of later Romanticists. His soul is healthily robust, too strong to be mortally wounded by the pangs of life, too sane and balanced to be overcome by any ecstasy. A manly sense of liberty is the animating force of his genius. He is essentially free-minded and deeply aware of the dignity and equality of men. His poetry breaths a spirit of irreverence ; he spares neither the church nor clergy, his independent beliefs do not feel bound by orthodox faith. He is frank to the extent of being confessional even about his private life. He has the inborn gift of quiet mirth, of a gaiety with a touch of fine irony. His poetry breathes a spirit of naivete with a strain of lurking slyness, a peasant-like atmosphere of shrewd observation and genial good nature. "It is the expression and playful revenge of a personality which judges life without embittered rancour and loves it without illusions." The language of his *Scott's Peoms* is difficult and the reader finds a glossary indispenable.

William Blake, the last of the pre-Romantic poets, marks the final stage in the evolution of poetry towards a full-fledged Romanticism. Even during his early years, the young Blake was a dreamer

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and a visionary. In his poetic works, we see a new intuition, a final liberation of the soul from the fetters of artificiality, barrenness, dry rules and conventions. We see in it a return through simplicity to the deeper power of the soul. What is true in the case of an individual is equally true in that of collective minds. Engish literature about this time, almost as a whole, is inspired by a similar intuition, a similar liberation of the soul, and a new life, which is evident in the heightening of his tone both in style, and in feeling. Blake, like Wordsworth, shows an absolute sincerity and a boldness of the soul hitherto unknown in the transition period. He renews and rejuvinates both feeling and literary expression.

Unlike Wordsworth, he is much less occupied with theory, and in his literary reforms, he follows no set programme. Instead of propounding and following any theory, he is thoroughly ruled by pure instinct. This is why in some respects and at the first attempt he goes farther than Wordsworth. "But if he surpasses the latter in the wealth of his prophetic gospel and in the simple purity of his inspiration he lacks his sense of balance. For the working out of a literary technique, and the application of a doctrine to the rule which presides over the art of words, what is wanted is a cool judgment." Wordsworth is still in our eyes the leader of a school. Blake, on the contrary, was and still remains a solitary figure.

Due to his extreme originality he could not win either public or official recognition. Only a small group knew his genious or dimly felt his greatness. But he never did a temperament show of greater individuality. He felt some influences, but in his mode of thinking, in his imagination, and in his artistic tastes, he is perfectly original. His poetry deals in the subtlest kind of symbolism. "His philosophy is a series of intuitive flights into the realm of the Absolute." His mind works in open defence of all the normal laws of logic. His language, particularly in the later part of his work, is unintelligible. His powerfully creative thought is free from all commonplace forms and conventions. His first poems and lyrical fragments are the product of a purely spontaneous effort, and show the working of an inner light and mysticism. The predominant, almost exclusive, theme of his poetry is the feeling of a child's impassioned soul. The natural tone of its language is a moving simplicity, while its emotions show a pure ardour. The essence of Romanticism is here in the short poems—*Poetical Sketches*, *Songs of Innocence*, and *Songs of Experience*. The elements of Romanticism—the sense of wonder, the contemplation of nature through fresh eyes, an intimate sympathy with the varieties of existence, and a sensibility supported by a strong imagination are all in evidence in these poems in the highest degree. His love of nature, animals and men, and all that his acute vision sees, are bathed in a halo of mystery and beauty, a meek pity and a holy anger. His first style is in a way a juvenile form of Romanticism.

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The words in his lines are welded together by a pure inspiration. They have the cadenced flow of natural music, and a melody, somewhat thin but supremely spontaneous. In the poetry of Blake, the dried-up spring of Elizabethan lyricism may be said to well up again. He is the prince of spiritual revolt. His doctrine may be likened to a vast gospel of liberty. He is a revolutionary spirit that embraces all the political ideas of the French Revolution. His style has often a biblical grandeur and simplicity. His ideas linger in literature like some hidden explosive force, but they wielded no influence. His language needs a sight practised and trained in deciphering it.

After Blake, during the first thirty years or so of the nineteenth century, 1798 to 1832, we see full-fledged Romanticism, with all its youthful vigour. All the characteristics, which were hitherto only in the making, now acquire an extreme intensity. We witness the full realization of a type of emotional and imaginative literature, that has at last been liberated from the cramping forces of sovereign reason, as well as those found in the artificial expression itself. The beginning of the new age in literature dates from the anonymous publication of *The Lyrical Ballads*, a joint effort of the united talents of Wordsworth and Coleridge (1798).

Classicism laid stress upon the impersonal aspects of the life of the mind. The new Romantic literature, on the other hand, shifts the emphasis upon the writer's personality, his individual sensibility and imagination. English Romanticism is the active reawakening of a creative impulse of a type formerly current in England, which for many years had tended to become rare, and almost to disappear, but which, during the last fifty years, had shown signs of a growing revival.

"The romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision and in its turn stimulating or directing such exercise. Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery ; such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the new literature." The romantic spirit consists in the intimate fusion, the close reciprocal dependence of emotion and imaginative vision, and the romantic literature is the product of a creative effort prompted by the emotional and imaginative tendencies. The new Romanticism is the result of a deeper probing into the self than of the exercise of pure imagination. Just as individual memory is a latent persistence of the thing remembered, so Romanticism was ever present in the background of the classical spirit. It is, therefore, only its return to life, an awakening from its dormant state. It lay hidden and forgotten, that is, beyond the limits of consciousness or remembrance for two centuries. A quest and a feeling of wonder for something with which the soul had been familiar in the past is essential to the new literature. If Romanticism is bathed in an atmosphere of wonder, this is not only because the imagination so long repressed, now comes into full play and at once seeks its satisfaction in the wonderful. "All that romantic

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writers imagine and feel, is accompanied by a shade of wonder, because they see those emotions and those images rise within themselves with a surprising spontaneousness, and because all such imaginings, in spite of their novelty, bring with a disturbing impression of an intimacy of old date. Romanticism is, as a whole, in this respect, a phenomenon of collective 'paramnesia' (forgetfulness), the reviviscence of a subconscious personality." —(*Cazamian*).

English Romanticism is not a homogeneous group of tendencies and writers. The two successive generations are clearly distinguishable in it, one before and the other after the final fall of Napoleon. Until about 1815, England is concentrated in a national effort to combat the France of Revolutionary and Imperial times. The first Romanticism, therefore, reacts against the Revolutionary ideal of France. About 1815, the situation is reversed. The Tory reaction comes to an end. On the other hand, some economic and political forces strongly direct the people in favour of an impatient liberalism. The middle-class business people and the citizens of the great industrial centres demand share in public affairs as in electoral rights. The offensive against an oligarchic regime becomes fiercer than ever.

In such an atmosphere, the second generation of Romanticists breathes a spirit of moral revolt. This generation receives the heritage or revolutionary thought. It embraces the ideas of liberty and rebellion, with a keen determination to secure independence and justice, and with an exclusive cult of the beautiful. It is innovatory and critical.

The writers of the first group, even though opposed to orthodox habits of language and style, are moral harmony with a large majority of the public. The Romanticism of the Lake poets takes its stand upon the emotions that are common to all, and idealizes them into poetry. The second generation, on the contrary, sets up a decided opposition between the artist and his surroundings. It carries the ardour of feeling and imagination to excess. It raises against the established order of things a manifold protestation full of generous passion, haughty sarcasm, or aesthetic detachment. Thus, Romanticism becomes a literature of social conflict. The Lake poets—Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, are the elder poets belonging to the first group of Romanticists. Shelley, Keats and Byron are the younger Romanticists belonging to the second group.

William Wordsworth, born in 1770 in the Lake district, after a hard life as a boy, studied at Cambridge. For thirteen months (1791-92), he was in Orleans, Blois, etc. Here he was won over to the cause of the French Revolution. On his return to England, the Reign of Terror, the state of war with France, and the trouble left in his soul by his passion for a young French girl, Annette Vallon, whose daughter he recognized but whom he believed he could not marry, all plunged him into a fit of the sympathy of his sister. Dorothy, brought moral healing, which in his turn led to a surer conviction

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of his poetic vocation. A friend of Coleridge, he was influenced by the latter's mystic idealism which he turned to a rather moral and human faith. The two worked out their literary doctrine in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). After a visit to Germany, he settled in the Lake district, at Grasmere, then at Rydal Mount. His inspiration, less fertile than before, created poems of an accent generally more moralizing, when dealing with political, social and religious teachings of a definitely conservative character. Having won distinction, honour, and laureateship in 1843, he died in 1850.

Wordsworth's creative originality is closely linked to his intimate contact with the revolutionary faith. His enthusiasm for the brotherhood of mankind played an important part in his life. From this spark was kindled the flame of idealism. Although, he had become opposed to all reform, he remained the apostle that the Revolution had made him. He took the essential initiative with a clearness of vision, which English poetry had been expecting for half a century. In order to renew so thoroughly the inspiration and language of poetry, to destroy an imperious tradition and to break a spell the utmost courage was required. Blake had this courage, which he owed to his mysticism but he was not fully aware of it. Wordsworth not only has this courage, but he is also aware of it, and the more certainly, because his literary reform is connected with his recent political zeal. That is why the doctrine of the *Lyrical Ballads* is an aesthetic application of sentimental democracy.

In this collection of verse, Wordsworth's contribution is much greater than that of Coleridge. It is written by a pains-taking effort of critical thought. Both poets make the human soul, the psychology of the human mind, the centre of art, the *Lyrical Ballads* and the poems of the same group are a series of moral analysis. The everyday life, not of the elegant refined classes, but of the people, and above all of the peasants form the subject of these analytical studies. Wordsworth's realism is a complex product in which, along with his desire for truth, a love of nature and simplicity, and a reaction against false nobleness, co-mingled with a social faith in the dignity of the humblest lives. The rustic austerity of these subjects is wholly lit up by the brilliancy of his meditative mind, and a halo of strangeness and mystery glorifies it. Wordsworth takes familiar reality of life as the object of his study, exalting and glorifying it through the strength of his power-reflective sensibility. Coleridge chooses the supernatural as his theme, and gives it an appearance of truth, so as to make it appeal to our feelings, By these inverse methods, the two poets drive towards the same goal—the intimate fusion of the real ideal. The bond that unites the real and the ideal in their poetry, is the new perception of the possibilities of 'wonderment' and beauty to be found in the simplest things. Suggestion is the real aim of this poetry. In appearance, this poetry is summed up in exact faithfulness to reality. With uncompromising bluntness in the *Lyrical Ballads*, it throws up in a full light the meaner traits of a suffering humanity. Man is

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shown in the setting of nature, exactly as he is in real life, without the least exaggeration or decoration. This poetry is deeply alive to nature's *influence upon* man. Therefore, in the pictures painted therein, a sympathetic and receptive mind can easily see all the inexpressible lessons taught by nature, animate and inanimate. Wordsworth constantly tries to stimulate our psychological insight on the belief that nothing is indifferent to one who is able to see and feel. Temperamentally, Wordsworth's choice falls upon that in which the humblest humanity is laid bare. His argument is that the emotions of the humblest humanity are pure and free from conventional alloy, and possess a power of more moving appeal. Meditation, tenderness, a philosophical and serious beauty are born of the vast widening of the soul's horizon. Never did poetry more nearly approach a character of pure spirituality.

The poetry of Wordsworth searched after a suitable form in which to express as correctly and forcefully as possible the intense and chosen moods of the poet. Such a form it found by instinct, but was unable at once to define. He never seriously believed that a poet's means of expression should coincide altogether with those of the most familiar speech. To him the *Lyrical Ballads* are nothing but experiments in the application of a new principle. He has a very exact intuition of this principle, even though he gives it definite shape only by degrees. This principle does not mean that the language of poetry should be exactly the same as that of conversation. It only means that such elements of the language of everyday use, should be employed in poetry as are most fitting for artistic suggestion. These elements will be those which the sincere and direct ardour of the need of expression spontaneously turns to use. They are words of intense forcefulness, corresponding to intense states of consciousness. But their intensity is of a wholly intense character, so that their distinctive feature is simplicity. The poetry of Wordsworth is based upon an effort to convey by simple means the impression of intensity. But the use of ordinary words does not suffice to create this impression. One thing more is necessary, namely, the deep-felt tone which reveals their tension, and brings into play their power of virtual suggestion. Music is possessed of adequate means by which the proper tone may be indicated, and Wordsworth does not fail to employ it to advantage.

Although unequal, and full of flaws, of lapes into the prosaic or into a tedious accuracy of statement, his shorter poems of the best period undoubtedly posses a unique value. Amoug them are pure masterpieces. In them the tension of the style is delightfully relaxed. An ecstatic or divinely childlike spontaneousness, as in Blake, here takes the place of concentration. Depth of feeling is clothed in a blithe spirit and most delicate simplicity. The effort of philosophical sincerity becomes idealized into lyricism. These effusions of Wordsworth are perceptible on very few writers ; but he broke the spell of an antiquated taadition, and his work inaugurated the reign of liberty. All the English poets of the nineteenth century are indirectly his heirs.

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At times, he escapes from the narrow bounds of the literary reformer in himself, into a lyrical exuberance, which carries his expression far above the level of ordinary life. His *Tintern Abbey* and his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* voice inner moods of so ardent and rare a quality that raise him far above this average fellow-men and give him a language that is in itself superior to that of normal experience. There is in them the highest art of a perfect harmony of thought and form. The greater part of *The Prelude*, and the finest passages of *The Excursion*, realize this harmony through a remarkable blending of poetry and doctrine. From these poems comes an invigorating freshness, coming mostly from free nature the presence of which, be it gentle, calm, austere or grand, yet ever wholesome, bathes the very inspiration of Wordsworth.

To him, nature appears as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike. To him, nature is a safe guide to wisdom and goodness. It is instinct with the illuminating presence of the divine. In his worship of nature, Wordsworth's creed is a mystical pantheism. Besides nature, the concrete humanity of the humble folk, of those who live in close contact with nature, is a source of happy exaltation. Finally, a note of personal tenderness an almost elegiac inclination to evoke the memories of his own childhood, makes *The Prelude* the most admirable record of a soul's progress towards the full realization of self.

The later part of his career shows a cooling inspiration, didactic aim that grows too prominent. He has still moments of beautiful, grand utterance, as in his *Sonnets*, which rank among the most robust in the English language. He retains to the end his nobility of thought and of form. But all that is exceptionally original in him belongs to the period of his first maturity. He is the psychological poet *par excellence*, and by bringing psychology into the domain of art he paved the way for the supreme enrichment of modern literature.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born in 1772, in Devonshire, studied at Christ's Hospital and Cambridge. Under Southey's influence, he adopted revolutionary principles. The instability of his nervous life, already evident from erratic impulses, led him to make constant use of opium. His poetic vocation was stimulated by his contact with Wordsworth in the West Country (1797-98) and after a short stay in Germany, in the Lake District. He had published *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) before collaborating in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in which his principal contribution was *The Rime of Ancient Mariner*. He stayed at Malta (1804-1806), and after a long struggle he began, about 1816, to free himself slowly from opium. He again published collections of poems (*Christabel*, etc., 1816), But from now onwards, it was prose which absorbed him (philosophy, criticism, religion, politics) : *The Statesman's Manual*, 1816 ; *Biographia Literaria*, 1817 ; *Aids to Reflection*, 1825, etc. He died in 1834. His lectures on Shakespeare, Milton, etc. (1808-1819) were collected after his death.

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"Coleridge possesses the most vigorous mind among the English Romanticists of the first generation. In some of his pieces, he is their most exquisite poet. But his works, his life, and even his thoughts are marked by an unhappy fate, which prevented him from reaching complete self-fulfilment." His nervous energy was unable to keep pace with his intellectual and artistic ambition involving, by his own choice, the greatest and the most exacting efforts. Unlike Wordsworth, he never recovered his balance.

3. LIFE OF JOHN KEATS (1795-1827)

Birth

Of all the great poets of the early nineteenth century, John Keats was the last born and the first to die. He was the son of Thomas Keats, a west country head ostler in a livery stable, and was born prematurely on the 29th or 31st of October, 1795, at Finsbury, London. He was the eldest of the five children of his father--four boys, one of whom died in infancy and a girl, the youngest of all. His father, Thomas, was a shrewd, careful man of business, his mother a lively young woman fond of enjoyment. He was brought up amid surroundings by no means calculated to awaken poetic genius. Hereditary influences and family environments seemed unpromising, and it is difficult to explain the birth of a genius in a family of *relatives, far or near*, none of whom showed any taste for art. Keats must have been a born genius, otherwise it is not easy to explain the birth of a great poet in the family of an ordinary stable-keeper.

His Education

At first, John and his brothers George Keats and Tom Keats were educated at a less expensive private school run by Rev. John Clarke at Enfield near London, where he remained for six years, without showing any signs of special interest in intellectual things. But, being high-spirited, affectionate and skilled in outdoor exercises, he was distinguished more for fighting than for study, and his bright, brave, generous nature, his fits of vehement passions, rapid changes of mood and extreme sensibility made him popular with masters and boys. His school-fellow and friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, son of Rev. Clarke—the headmaster, said of him—"He was not merely the favourite of all, like a pet prize-fighter, for his terrible courage ; but his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of mean motive, his placability, his generosity wrought so general a feeling in his behalf, that I never heard a word of disapproval from anyone, superior or equal, who had known him." This was an indication of his future greatness but not in the realm of literature.

Interest in Literature

During his last two years at school, Keats had developed a great enthusiasm and love for literature, which remained unabated during his four years of apprenticeship, and he spent all his leisure during this period in reading books of literature and translating Virgil's

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Aeneid into English prose. Clarke's literary companionship at school and afterwards, proved very fruitful. At school, Keats devoured every book that came in his way, specially relishing stories of the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece. He borrowed books from Clarke, read them and discussed them with him at Enfield. Once Cowden Clarke introduced him to the works of Spenser, "the poets' poet". Keats read the great master's *The Faerie Queene* and, like so many other poets who received their first inspirations from Spenser, Keats was charmed by this moral allegory. It was the first incident of great importance in Keats's life which prompted him to write and greatly helped to develop his poetic genius. Brown, a friend of Keats writes of him, "Though born to be a poet, he was ignorant of his birthright until he had completed his eighteenth year. It was *The Faerie Queene* that awakened his geneius. In Spenser's fairyland he was enchanted, breathed in a new world, and became another being till, enamoured of the stanza, he attempted to imitate it, and succeeded." But of all the poets he studied, Shakespeare, whose works permeated Keats's whole being, widened his view of life and increased his humanity, welded the widest and deepest influence on him.

A Great Decision

When nineteen, Keats returned, in 1815, from Edmonton to London, for he quarrelled with Dr. Hammond and left him a year before the completion of his apprenticeship. In London, he continued his training as a student of St. Thomas's Hospital and Guy's. Though an industrious and able medical student, he gradually realized that poetry was his true vocation. Soon, even against his guardian's opposition, Keats decided to give up his medical profession in favour of poetic vocation. Luckily for Keats, Cowden Clarke also came over to London, and introduced him to the literary circle, of which Leigh Hunt, something of a poet himself and a pleasant prose writer, was the leading spirit. Hunt's encouragement did much to stimulate Keats's genius. Here also Keats was glad to meet other notable literary men of the time—Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, Shelley, etc. Another man besides Hunt, who became Keats's great friend and wielded a special influence upon him, was Haydon, "an artist of mediocre creative talent but great aims" an amazing belief in himself, and a fine critical faculty. He helped to guide and direct Keats's taste by explaining to him the beauty of the masterpieces of Greek sculpture—the Elgin Marbles. Keats would have become a successful surgeon by his surprising skill in surgery. But he did not like to rot in a hospital, and the fascination of poetry was to him irresistible. His brothers also encouraged him for the change. Hence, in the teeth of Mr. Abbey's opposition, Keats finally made his choice for poetry.

His First Attempt at Poetry

The poetic Muse was already at work in him before his switching over from surgery to poetry—a far cry. But now, instead of writing with a boy's secrecy, he circulated his earliest verses among his friends

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whose praise of them was a source of great joy and encouragement to him. His reading of Homer's poems revealed to him a vast unexplored treasure of mythology and wonder. In 1817, Keats published the first little volume of poems, including *Sleep and Poetry*, and it was dedicated to Leigh Hunt. The sonnet of dedication was hurriedly dashed off and not a word of the first draft was altered. There is much in this volume, which strikes the key-note of the typical in Keats's later work. There are many memorable lines, and touches of his unique insight into nature. Yet the volume showed considerable immaturity, and was anything but a success. It was criticized, but far from being discouraged. Keats knew his faults better than the critics and felt his power to outgrow them. His friend, Haydon, advised him to devote himself to the development of his poetic talent by undisturbed study. So Keats went to the Isle of Wight in the hope of getting quiet and rest there. But in the chance of agreeable company there he returned to London. In 1818, he finished his *Endymion* which was violently attacked by critics, although in its preface he had explained its imperfection.

On May 10, Keats wrote to Haydon—"I read Shakespeare—indeed I shall, I think, never read any other book much." Spenser's influence on him continued but Shakespeare's had become the dominant influence. Gradally, he also came under the influence of Wordsworth's philosophy of poetry and life, and of Milton in respect of his style to some extent. "But Shakespeare's influence was the widest, deepest and most lasting, though it is the hardest to define. His study of other poets left traces upon his work in turns of phrase or turns of thought ; Shakespeare permeated his whole being, and his influence is to be detected not in a resemblance of style, for Shakespeare can have no imitators, but in broadening view of life, and increased humanity." Keats knew very little of Latin and no Greek, and all his knowledge of classical stories, which he loved and constantly used, came to him from his reading of Chapman's translations of Homer's *Iliad*, etc.

Tour and Illness

On his return to London, he and his brother Tom took lodgings at Hampstead. Here he stayed for sometime, worried by the illness of Tom. The departure of his brother, George, to seek his fortune in America, depressed Keats's spirit all the more. Moreover, immediately after his undue strain in completing his *Endymion*, he completed *Isabella*. As a result of these overstrains and enxieties he felt compelled to relax himself. So he set on a long walking tour in the North with his friend Charles Browne visiting the English Lakes, Dumfries and parts of Ireland and Scotland. But the holiday brought tragic consequences. While crossing the Isle of Mull, he contracted sore throat, which proved very troubleseme, and he cut short his holiday and returned home. This was the first sign of the fatal disease which ultimately took Keats's life. 'This was the beginning of the end. There was consumption in the family ; Tom was dying of it ;

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and the cold, wet, and over-exertion of his Scotch tour seem to have developed the fatal tendency in Keats himself."—(*M. Hills*). From now onwards he was never well and until Tom's death, in 1818, Keats never left his bedside. Immediately on his return to London, his *Endimion* was brutally criticized. This together with the death of Tom, George's migration to America, and the alarming symptoms of his growing illness left him desolate and miserable.

He turned again to poetry for relief, and his most anxious days of misery and suffering gave his finest poetry to the world. The first few months of 1819 were the most fruitful of his life. Besides working on *Hyperion*, which he had begun during Tom's illness, he wrote *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *The Eve of St. Mark*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and almost all his famous odes.

His Romance with Fanny Brawne

Troubles, however, continued to depress him. He had to render financial assistance to his poor artist-friend, Haydon, who was in dfficulties. His own illness was growing more and more alarming, and, above all, he was consumed by an unsatisfying passion for one Miss Fanny Brawne, the young and beautiful daughter of a neighbour, Mrs. Brawne. She returned his love, but she seems never to have understood his nature and needs. His failing health and poverty seemed to him to stand in the way of his marriage with Fanny. Consequently, "his love throghtout brought him restlessness and torment rather than peace any comfort."

About the end of July, he want to Shanklin and there, in collaboration with Brown, wrote a play, *Otto the Great*. There, too he had begun to write *Lamia*. His last achievements are really wonderful because his thoughts at this time, which were *deeply* coloured by his grief and melancholy and depression, were faithfully expressed in his poems. He returned to London and determined temporarily to give up writing poetry, so as to be able to earn money by reviewing (or, journalism) and support himself and his needy brother in America. He gave up poetry, but return to it now and then. But he found himself unable, due to his failing health, to bear the strain of writing poetry any more.

In February 1820, before the completion of *Hyperion* and *The Cap and Bells*, a satire, he had an attack of illness, which gave the first definite sign of consumption. On the evening of Thursday, February 3, he came home in high fever caused by his careless exposure while driving on a very chilly day. As soon as he lay in bed, he coughed and spat blood. His medical knowledge was sufficient to diagnose his disease. Brown quotes Keats's own words on that occasion : "It is arterial blood ; I cannot be deceived in that colour ; that drop of blood is my death warrant ; I must die." He lived for another year but he himself called it his 'posthumous life'. He was the victim of consumption.

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The Tragic End

His last volume of poetry published in the first month of his illness was highly admired by reviewers and the public. But Keats did not care much for fame now, for he knew he was fast nearing his end. The only thought that was at that time tormenting his soul, was that death would separate him from the woman he loved. In spring, there was a temporary recovery. But soon the doctors warned him that a winter in England would kill him. His darling, Fanny Brawne, and her mother did all they could do to help him in distress. But all in vain. In September 1820, he left London for Naples (Italy) with one of his most devoted friends, Joseph Severn, a young artist. There Shelley invited him to stay with him at Pisa. But Keats refused, for they were mere acquaintances and not deep friends and Keats, as an invalid, did not want to be a burden on Shelley, though Shelley seemes to have liked him. He and Severn reached Rome, but there his condition rapidly worsened in spite of Severn's desperately devoted nursing. Separation from Fanny Brawne and his penniless condition constantly preyed upon his mind, and besides, the change of climate did him no good. On February 23, 1821, he breathed his last, for which he had begun to long. He died peacefully in the arms of Severn. On the 26th, he was buried in the beautiful cemetery of which Shelley said that it 'made one in love with death to think that he could be buried in so sweet a place.' Such was the end of a life which was a miracle of twenty-five years.

Many sympathizers attributed Keats's death, in part at least, to the brutal treatment which Keats had received from critics and reviewers. They were angry, rather indignant, with such critics. Shelley and Byron expressed this indignation in their poems—Shelley in his *Adonais*, a great elegy by a poet on the death of a fellow-poet, and Byron in his *Don Juan*.

4. KEATS AS A MAN

1. Keats was a young man of delicate and charming personality. He was a man of a rather short stature, *with a small* graceful head, golden brown hair, noble forehead, a longish face, bright large brown eyes, and a sensuous mouth.

2. In his boyhood, Keats was brave and impassioned and remained so even in his youth. It is a mistaken belief that Keats was a weak, almost effeminate and sentimental or hysterical youth. He was on the contrary, bright and full of youthful zeal. Of course he was always spirited and gay. He richly deserved their affection and was always their most loved friend.

3. His warm and affectionate nature is pretty evident from his deep love for his brothers, sister and mother, as well as from his most sincere and affectionate regard for his friends, he was always spirited anyway. But unfortunately for him, he was a victim of continued ill-health, financial difficulties and bitter criticism of his poetic work,

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which made him embittered and dis-spirited as he was. There is otherwise no doubt in his inherent geniality. He was also a bit too conscious of his humble birth, which was partly responsible for his damped spirit.

4. He was truly a noble and good soul, a lover of truth and beauty, and a man of refined artistic tastes. In his actions he was always guided by these qualities. He had plenty of courage, and bore his prolonged illness with fortitude.

Mr. Sidney Colvin sums up Keats's personality thus : "Left fatherless at eight, motherless at fifteen, and subject during the forming period of life to no discipline but that of apprenticeship in surgery, he showed in his life such generosity, modesty, humour, and self-knowledge, such a spirit of conduct and degree of self-control as would have done honour to one infinitely better trained and hardly tried." A later critic writes that Keats was "one of the bravest and wisest and most beautiful spirits that England has been privileged to engender."

5. KEATS'S DEVELOPMENT AS A POET

According to a critic of Keats, John Keats's poetic career has three important features :

(i) The sudden flowering of his poetic sensibility which had lain slumbering for a comparatively long time.

(ii) A continuous development towards maturity of style and profundity of thought which emerges gradually through the struggle between the lure of the imaginative beauty and a growing consciousness of the miseries of the world.

(iii) The concentration of all that is best in his poetry within brief span of a single year, a spell of the most vigorous assertion of creative spirit before it was quenched by his premature death.

When he was about seventeen years old, Keats became acquainted with the works of Spenser, and this proved to be the turning-point in his life. The mannerisms of the Elizabethans immediately captivated him, and he resolved to imitate him. His earliest attempt at verse is his *Imitation of Spenser* (1813), written when he was eighteen. This and some other short pieces were published together in his *Poems* (1817), his first volume of verse. This book contains little of any outstanding merit, except for some of its sonnets, which include the superb *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*. The poems, which include *Sleep and Poetry* and *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, show the influence of Spenser and, more immediately, of Leigh Hunt, to whom the volume was dedicated. Of a different quality was his next volume, called *Endymion* (1818). Probably based partly on Drayton's *The Man in the Moon* and Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, this remarkable poem of *Endymion* professes to tell the story of a lovely

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youth who was kissed by the moon-goddess on the summit of Mount Latmos. Keats develops this simple myth into an intricate and flowery and rather obscure allegory of over four thousand lines. The work is clearly immature, and flawed with many weaknesses both of taste and of construction, but many of the passages are most beautiful, and the poem shows the tender budding of the Keatsian style – a rich and suggestive beauty obtained by richly ornamented diction. The first line is often quoted, and it contains the theory that Keats followed during the whole of his poetical career :

"*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.*"

The crudeness of the work laid it temptingly open to attack, and, as we have noticed, the hostile reviews found it an easy prey.

Keats's health was already failing, but the amount of poetry he wrote is marvellous both in magnitude and in quality. His third and last volume, published in 1820 just before he left England, contains a collection of poems of the first rank, which were written approximately in the order that follows :

Isabella, or The Pot of Basil (1818), is a version of a tale from Boccaccio, and deals with the murder of a lady's lover by her two wicked brothers. The poem, which is written in *ottava rima* marks a decided advance in Keats's work. The slips of taste are fewer ; the style deeper in tone ; the tale is told with an economy and precision new in Keats. And the conclusion, though it is sentimentally treated, is not wanting in pathos.

In *Hyperion* (begun 1818, abandoned 1819), Keats took up the epic theme of the primeval struggle between the older race of gods, such as Apollo. Both in style and structure the poem is modelled on *Paradise Lost*. The blank verse has not much of the sonorous weight and dignity of its model. At the same time, it replaces the vigour and passion of Milton with a repose and charm of its own. As the peom progresses, the Miltonic is gradually supplanted by a tone more truly Keats's own, and in the third book it ends abruptly, because, as Keats himself said, it was too Miltonic. It is doubtful whether it could ever have been completed as it lacks the gripping action which must be the basis of the epic poem. Yet, as far as it goes, *Hyperion* is a successful work, which has been claimed by some critics as Keats's greatest achievement. Book II provides us with the fullest exposition he was ever to give of his theory that "first in beauty shall be first in might," and the poem shows clearly his growing control over structure and style. It is full of striking passages, of which the following, the opening lines, is a good example :

"Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat grey-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence roundabout his lair ;

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Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the father'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest,
A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips."

The Eve of St. Agnes (1819), regarded by others as his finest narrative poem, is a tale of elopement of two lovers. The story is slight but moves quickly ; the background of family feud is kept well in mind, and the love-scenes are more controlled than those in *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, In the chivalric tone, the stanza form, and the occasional archaisms, the influence of Spenser is seen ; but the style is Keats's own, and the poem is full of beauties of description, imagery and colour. It is sensuous and highly decorative without doing, cloying. Typical of its exquisite beauty is the following stanza :

"Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon :
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She meem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven : Porphyro grew faint :
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint."

In the same year was written *The Eve of St. Mark* which remains unfinished. It has the fine pictorial work of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, but the material is handled with more restraint. In style it is effortless, and free from Keats's fault of overluxriance.

The story of *Lamia* (1819), is taken from Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and tells of a beautiful enchantress. The narrative is well-handled, runs smoothly, and shows a true sense of proportion than *Endymion*, though here again, the story is rendered somewhat obscure by the introduction of a rather confused allegory. In style, it is modelled on the fables of Dryden and the heroic couplet is skilfully used. The poem is full of typically Keatsian pictorial richness, which, on occasion, becomes rather excessive. The following description of the snake-enchantress is one of the more gorgeous part of the story :

"She was a Gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, and blue :
Striped like zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;
And full of silver moons, that as, she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed

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Their lustre with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd at once some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demo's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire,
Sprinkled with stars like Ariadane's tiar :
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete ;
And for the eyes ; what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep that they were born so fair ?
At Proserpine still weeps for her Sicillian air.
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake."

At the end of 1819, Keats made an attempt to refashion his unfinished epic *The Fall of Hyperion, Dream.* Casting off the Miltonic style of the first version, Keats here creates a blank verse which accords well with a severer and more thoughtful tone than is to be found in any other of his poems. It carries still further Keats's philosophy of beauty which he now feels to be attainable only by those who have experienced pain. Over the merits of this revision, as compased with the original draft, controversy has raged. A comparison of parallel versions of the same passage will show that, in many cases, the splendour and magic of the first have gone. On the other hand, it may be argued that not only is the poem more turly Keats's own, but that it shows a deeper insight into human problems.

Together with the longer poems are many shorter pieces of supreme beauty. The great odes *To a Nightingale, On a Grecian Urn, To Psyche, On Melancholy, To Autumn*—were nearly all written in 1819, and in their approach to flawless perfection the best of them are unequalled in Keats. Between the impassioned longing for escape of the first and the calm of fruition of the last, there is a very great difference, but all, with the exception of *To Autumn,* show a concern with the poet's desire for the true beauty, and they, thus, have a close link with *Endymion, Hyperion, Lamia,* and *The Fall of Hyperion.* The odes are experiments in verse form based on the sonnet. All except *To Autumn,* which has an eleven-line stanza, are in stanzas of ten lines, made up of the Shakesperean quatrain and Petrarchan sestet. We quote the first stanza of the well-known *Ode To Autumn,* probably the most perfect poem Keats ever wrote :

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness !
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run ;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To well the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more

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And still more, later flowers for the bees,
United they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er brimm'd their clammy cells."

As a sonneteer, Keats ranks with the greatest English poets. Of his sixty-one soonets some ten, including *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*, *When I have fears that I may cease to be*, and *Bright Star, Would I were steadfast as thou art*, are worthy to be ranked with those of Shakespeare's. After a strict adherence to the Petrarchan form in the 1817 volume, Keats turned to the Shakespearean form, which undoubtedly suited him better. The sonnet quoted below will show how effortless is his best work in this medium :

"When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain ;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows with the magic hand of chance ;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love :—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink."

Among the other shorter poems *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, a kind of lyric ballad, is considered to be one of the choicest in the language.

Ia 1819, Keats collaborated in a drama, *Otto the Great*, and began another *King Stephen*, which he did not complete. Neither effort is of much consequence. *The Cap and Bells*, a longish fairy-tale which also is unfinished, is much below the level of his usual work.

6. A SURVEY OF KEATS'S POETICAL WORKS

Poems Published in 1817

Poems of 1817 were written during the period between November 1815 and April 1817. They are the products of the combined influence of the older English poets, specially of Spenser, and of Leigh Hunt. Numerous marshy and sandy flats of sterile and futile verse are interpersed with purple patches of great promise. The most notable poems in this volume are *Epistles To George Felton Mathew*, *To My brother George*, and *To Charles Cowden Clarke*, the poem beginning *I stood tip-toe upon a little hill*, *Sleep and Poetry*, and a few sonnets including *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, *To one who has been long in city pent*, and *The poetry of earth is never dead*.

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Most of the poems are written in the heroic verse, which however, is free from the eighteenth century conventional shackles. The element in which the youthful poet moves is liberty and 'the spirit which animates him is essentially the spirit of delight ; delight in the beauty of nature and the vividness of sensation, delight in the charm of fable and romance, in the thoughts of friendship and affection, in anticipations of the future, and in the exercise of the art itself.'—(*Sidney Colvin*).

His distinctive character as a poet of nature quite clearly revealed even in this first volume. The sentiment of nature in Keats was simpler in him than in Wordsworth or Shelley. To appreciate Wordsworth's treatment of nature, one must develop the faculty of looking into the innermost recesses of his mind and the passages of his soul. Shelley conceived the remote and skyey phenomena as symbols of a happier and loftier world. In Keats the enjoyment of nature is more direct and more disinterested. He loved nature for her own sake and felt infinite pleasure in communicating his frank delight through the art of poetry.

(1) Epistles

The *Epistles* have at times a colloquial style and Keats makes a number of experiments and varies the regularity of the heroic couplet, sometimes the lines overflow as in Chaucer. The *Epistles* besides revealing his affectionate nature snow his passionate fondness for literature which he would like to share with his friends.

(2) On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

Strangely enough, this early volume contains possibly one of the most splendid sonnets of English poetry. It is also most widely known among his sonnets, the sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*. As Palgrave remarked, to find in Chapman's Homer, the 'pure serene' of the original, 'the reader must bring with him the imagination of the youthful poet ; he must be a Greek himself, as Shelley finaly said to Keats.' By sheer alchemy of genius, Keats has transformed the reminiscences of his school-boy reading into magnificent poetry. Whether it is Cortez or Balboa, the magic of the closing lines is inescapable.

(3) Sleep and Poetry

Possibly the last written among the poems, included in this 1817 volume, is *Sleep and Poetry*. He already shows that capacity for self-knowledge which was the most admirable of his traits.

'O Poetry ! for thee I hold my pen,
That am not yet a glorious denizen
Of thy wide heaven.....
.....yet, to my ardent prayer,
Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air.'

He will taste all the imaginative pleasures which a sensuous perception of nature will offer, but he knows that he—

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'.....must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts'

which in one of his sonnets, *On sitting down to read King Lear once again*, he calls,

'.....the fierce dispute
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay.'

There is again the Shakespearean felicity of the touch of nature in a passage like this :

'Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown ;
The reading of an ever-changing tale :
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil ;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air ;
A laughing schoolboy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.'

There is no better illustration of Milton's dictum than that poetry is a 'sensuous art'.

Keats, unlike Wordsworth or Coleridge, did not theorize about the artificial poetic diction of the eighteenth century or fulminate against the conventions of reason and taste, but *Sleep and Poetry* well illustrates the spirit of delight and of liberty of the new age. But in spite of the 'morning freshness' of some of the passages, the volume had a poor sale and did create much of a stir.

(4) Endymion

Endymion (1818) is his the longest poem. The story of Endymion has been variously alluded to by several ancient Greek writers like Theocritus and Ovid. Keats, however, does not seem to have been familiar with them. Keats knew the story from his classical dictionaries and was also indebted to Drayton and Fletcher for certain hints, specially to the former's *Man in the Moon* for the wanderings of Endymion. Like his hero, he himself was exquisitely sensitive to the physical and spiritual spell of moonlight and the adventures of Endymion are symbolical of the experiences of the poetic soul for union with absolute beauty. The heroine Cynthia is also more like Shelley's Intellectual Beauty than Lempriere's Diana. In this classical love-tale of the shepherd-prince and the goddess, he depicts the passion of the human soul for "absolute beauty in its divine manifestations, such as, moonlight and sunlight, earth and sea, friendship and love, heroic enterprise and heroic death." The manner of his narrative is far from Greek, though he was a Greek in his passion for the joys of nature, in his capacity to conceive the powers of nature in concrete human shapes or in the anthropomorphic faculty of his mind.

Those who will read *Endymion* as a story-poem will be disappointed. The narrative is poor and diffuse. As Robert Bridges has remarked, "Keats thought to *surprise by a fine excess*, his excess rather confuses and blurs, and it is a severe task to keep the attention fixed. There is also a want of definition in the actual narration.

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In Book II, Endymion wanders in strange places, which however, cannot easily be located. But all these defects should not have blinded contemporary opinion to the many poetic excellences or to its allegorical import.

The poem undoubtedly has an inner meaning. The Moon represents the principle of Beauty in all things. It is absolute Beauty or the supersensuous quality which is the ideal of Man. The love of woman is essentially love of absolute beauty, but Endymion falls in love with the Indian lady, a physical woman, and is filled with despair. But the Indian maiden is no other than the goddess herself in disguise. It is only by traversing the dark places of life that the poet can attain the fruition of ideal beauty. *Endymion* has all the incoherence of a dream and its deeper meaning is thus obscured. Keats grew tired of it and had a poor opinion of it. But with all its imperfections, it still remains as 'a little region in which lovers of poetry may wander.'

(5) Isabella

His next poem of importance was *Isabella*. It was begun in February 1818, and finished during the next two months. The story is taken from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It is the fifth story told on the fourth day in *Decameron*. 'Lisabetta's brothers slay her lover, who appeareth to her in a dream and showeth her where he is burried, whereupon she privily disinterreth his head and setteth in a poet of basil. Thereover making moan a great while everyday, her brothers take it from her and she for grief dieth a little thereafterward.' Lisabetta is the proper name of the heroine of the story immortalized by Keats as 'Isabella' and is one of the many forms of Elizabeth, Isabetta and Isabella being others. Keats transfers the story from Messina to Florence and he chooses to write the story in the Italian *ottava rima* (octave stanza), used by Tasso in his *Jerusalem Delivered*, by Ariosto and others. It was imported into English by Wyatt and naturalized soon after by several writers. It is of eight iambic pentameter lines and rhymes *ab ab ad cc*.

The modest passion of Isabella and Lorenzo in Keats's story is superior in art and ethics to the vulgar intrigue, which almost half justifies her brothers' vengeance in Boccaccio. The dream is a matter of fact recital in Boccaccio. Keats turns it into a strangely beautiful picture of the shadowy life of the murdered Lorenzo.

'Around me beeches and his chestnuts shed
Their leaves and prickly nuts ; a sheepfold bleat
Comes from beyond the river to my bed .
... ...
I am a Shadow now, alas ! alas !
Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling
Alone.'

Keats invoking Boccaccio refers to his own story as

'An echo of thee in the northwind sung.'

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Indeed he sets the southern story in a northern landscape.
In the stream of Arno—

'.....the bream
Keeps head against the freshets.'

Boccaccio's manner is direct and nothing could be less sentimental than his manner. Keats, on the contrary, broods over every image of beauty or passion. Youthful excesses or immaturities are still there, but *Isabella* marks a distinct advance on *Endymion*. The movement of the story is still hampered by the wealth of poetry and his delineation of passion hardly equals his hold upon sense-material. And, but for a few poignant touches, the drawing of passion is rather tender than potent and there is 'an effusively false touch' in the phrase—

'.....this erstwhile timid lips grew bold
And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme.'

(6) Hyperion

The great unfinished poems on the same theme, *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, mark the opening and closing of the most amazingly creative year that any English poet ever achieved. From September 1818 to September 1819, Keats wrote practically every poem that places him among the major poets of the world.

Soon after his strenuous Scotch tour he plunged into the most arduous poetic labour he had yet undertaken. The subject of *Hyperion* had been long in his mind. It was there when he wrote *Endymion*. In the meanwhile, he had fallen under the influence of Milton. *Hyperion* was to narrate the overthrow of the elemental Titanic gods by the new Olympian hierarchy. He places the scene on earth and, thus, overcomes some of the difficulties that the supramundane character of the conflict presents and his romantic love of nature also finds full play when Hyperion is brought down to earth where also the other gods are wandering. Certain hints of the gods are supplied by Milton's 'Pandemonium' and also by ancient Greek sculpture. After writing a little more than two books, he broke it off in April 1819 on the ground that it was overshadowed by Milton and was finally discarded five months later. But the real reason possibly lay elsewhere. The subject that the Olympian gods, being superior in youth and beauty to the Titanic gods, had overthrown the Titans, lacked the solid basis of outward event, 'by which alone epic interest and sublimity could be maintained.'

Hyperion, though a fragment, is the only poem since Milton which has seriously challanged the epic place. The overthrow of Hyperion by Apollo meant the dethronement of an older and ruder worship by one more advanced and humane, in which ideas of ethics and of arts held a larger place beside ideas of nature and her brute powers. The speech of Oceanus, in Book II, illustrates this idea with great beauty and force. There is also something grand and elemental in his conception of the colossal shapes of the early gods and

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we may hear their half divine and half human voices in the inarticulate sounds of nature. The conception of the palace of Hyperion with its 'phantom terrors of coming doom is worthy of any great epic genius.

The poem, as we know, was written by fits and starts. Its composition was interrupted by bereavement, material anxiety and a growing passion, and he gave it up saying that it had 'too many Miltonic inversions', but as Robert Bridges points out, its grandeur is mainly due to its style.

(7) The Eve of St. Agnes

Keats laid aside *Hyperion* in January 1819, and took up the composition of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, an unsurpassed study in pure colour and clear melody. It is not a tragedy like *Isabella* and may not rival it in its human pathos and passion, but in every other poetic quality it surpasses the former poem.

Porphyro, like Romeo, falls in love with the daughter of a hostile house and Keats brings it into association with the old popular belief as to the way a maiden might be granted a vision of her lover in a dream. The figure of Madeline brings back before the mind's eye the picture of Marlowe's Hero and the sleeping presence of Shakespeare's Imogen. Keats does not however, depend in this story-poem on stress of incidents or depth of sentiment. "Its personages appeal to us, not so much humanly and in themselves, as by the circumstances, scenery and atmosphere amidst which we see them move." The charm of the medieval colour and mystery in the poem is an unfailing source of delight, but it has not got the deep human interest of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. Keats achieves a marvellous effect by the use of contrasts. The wakeful lovers are contrasted with the fierce sleeping warriors tormented by nightmare, the happy Madeline with the joyless withered Angela, the youthful Porphyro with the aged beadsman. Note also the skilful use of cantrast between the cruel cold without and the warm love within, the noise and revelty and the hush of Medeline's bedroom. The moonlight which is chill and sepulchral eleswhere is an angelic light to Madeline. It is also worth noting how inanimate things, endowed by Keats with a sort of half-conscious life, lend a mysterious charm to the poem.

'The carved angels ever eager-eyed
Star'd whereupon their head the cornice rests
With their blown back, and wings
put cross-wise on their breasts.'

In Medeline's chamber,

'A shielded scutcheon *blush'd* with
blood of queens and kings.'

Similarly, by transferring *dumb* from person to place in 'dumb orat'ries', he awakens in us a mysterious sense of life in inanimate things.

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Stray reminiscences of his reading of Shakespeare and Chatterton are singularly felicitous. For the contrast between the rude wassailers in the castle and the emotion of Porphyro, Keats is indebted, though unconsciously, to a similar contrast in *Hamlet*. 'The kettledrum and the far-heard clarinet' is reminiscent of—

'The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up spring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.' (*Hamlet*, I. iv.)

The 'Porter, in uneasy sprawl' may remind one of the Porters in *Macbeth* and Porphyro's assurance—

"There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead'

may be linked with

'.....when in swinish sleep,
Their drenched natures lie as in a death'.
—(*Macbeth*, I. vii).

Chatterton's influence is specially felt in Keat's favourite device of a collection of eqithets, such as, 'meagre, barefoot, wan' by which he describes the beadsman, or 'pale, lattic'd, chill' by which he describes the 'little moonlit room.'

(8) Lamia

Keats got the story of *Lamia* in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and he felt that 'there is that sort of fire in it which must take hold of people in some way.' He was right. *Lamia* has always caught the imagination of the public, although Keats is not always at his happiest in *Lamia*.

It was probably in June 1819, that he started *Lamia*, in which, after a study of Dryden's *Fables*, he returned to the measure of *Endymion*. The measure is handled less in Elizabethan manner and with greater firmness and skill. Like Dryden, he now makes frequent use of the Alexandrine and the triplet. 'The best he gained from his study of Dryden's Fables, a debt perhaps to Chaucer rather than to Dryden, was a notable advance in constructive power. In *Lamia*, he shows a much greater selective power, and sense of proportion than in *Endymion*. *Lamia*, though it marks a definite advance in narrative power, lacks the unity of impression of *The Eve of St. Agnes* and the human interest of *Isabella*.

At this time Keats was feeling both the fascination and the slavery of passion and also the resistance offered to it by what he called philosophy or reason which in *Lamia* is typified by Apollonius—

'.....who look'd thereon with eyes severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere',

and who infested

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'With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends'.

The conflict of sensuous love and philosophp produces an osciliation which is never brought to rest in *Lamia*. The allegorical significance of the story seems to be that philosophy alone is cold and destructive while the pleasures of senses alone are unsatisfying and unreal. At times we are made to feel that the love of Lycius is a passing and ruinous illusion and sometimes that the mutual passion of Lycius and Lamia is a beautiful thing, the destruction of which was needless, and that is why, *Lamia* struck the imagination of Lamb, but his heart was given to *Isabella*. Owing to the nature of the subject, it is much richer in imagery and painting than *Isabella*, and Keats's style rises to supreme heights in the passages on the metamorphosis of the serpent, the entry of Lycius and Lamia into Corinth, the description of the Fairy Hall and Lamia's withering under the austere gaze of Apollonius.

(9) The Odes

In the spring months of 1819, after the completion of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats was chiefly engaged in the composition of the unique Odes which have no parallel and are a class by themselves. They are very different from his famous roundelay of the Indian maiden *Endymion*, Book IV; which approaches Shelley in lyrical passion and equals Coleridge in suggestive touches of 'wild musical beauty and far-sought romance.'

'Had Keats left us only his Odes, his rank among the poets would not be lower than it is, for they have stood apart in literature.' —(*Robert Bridges*). They are indeed unique and they owe very little to the famous Odes of the past. The Ode is defined in the Oxford New English Dictionary as a 'rimed lyric often in the form of an address, generally dignified or exalted in subject, feeling and style.' This definition is rather vague and does not help us to distinguish the Ode from other kinds of lyrical poetry. As a matter of fact, opinions may differ about the exact features of an Ode. Dignity of theme and style is essential. In addition to his dignity, all great Odes are characterized by a 'logical evolution of thought.' Keats's Odes have all these features and they posses many other qualities for which they are incomparable. His Odes are regular and simple in form and are singularly free from the declamatory or rhetorical note which is the common bane of Odes, and from which Wordsworth's greatest Ode, the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* is not quite free. There is nothing artificial and every line or word seems to have emanated from nature. They are, thus, far removed in character from the Pindaric Odes of Gray or the didactic achievements of Wordsworth. 'They are written in a strain, intense indeed, but meditative and brooding.'

In the spring of 1819, he had composed five of these immortal Odes. They are *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ode on Melancholy* based

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on his own moods, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Psyche* inspired by ancient Greek sculpture and mythology, and *Ode on Indolence* which was again based on a mood of lethargy and languor. Keats had not included the *Indolence* Ode in the 1820 volume, his critical mind possibly considering it to be decidedly inferior to the other Odes composed during this period. In execution, the most perfect is his *Ode to Autumn*, composed in September 1819. 'Of these perhaps the two nearest to absolute perfection, to the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost beauty possible to human words, may be that to *Autumn* and that on a *Grecian Urn* ; the most radiant, fervent and musical is that to a *Nightingale* ; the most pictorial and perhaps the tenderest in its ardour of passionate fancy is that to *Psyche*; the subtlest in sweetness of thought and feeling is that on *Melancholy*. Greater lyrical poetry the world may have seen than any that is in these : lovelier it surely has never seen, nor ever can it possibly see.' The faultless force and the profound subtlety of his unerring instinct for the absolute expression of absolute natural beauty, his capacity to condense a whole world of association into a single word or phrase or line rank him beside the greatest poets of the world, though he was only twenty-five years old.

(i) Ode to a Nightingale

The finest of the four Odes written in the spring of 1819, the *Ode tc a Ninghtingale*, is the most passionately human and personal. He did not think of the particular bird of Hampstead but of its song which had been beautiful and delightful for centuries. The poem, as we know, was composed in the morning, but in the Ode, the Queen-Moon is on her throne' and the Nightingale is a type of the race imagined as singing in a far-off scene of woodland mystery of 'verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways'. The poet would like to escape from the woes of the world, 'where youth grows pale and spectre-thin,' to the fairyland, to the

'.....melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless.'

After the death of his brother Tom, whom he had loved and nursed devotedly to the end, he was feeling keenly the tragedy of the world, where youth and beauty are perishable and life is sad and heroic. He had known love also. But what is love worth when it is awakened by beauty which is transitory ? He, therefore, longs to escape from this world of realities and sorrows to the world of ideal beauty, the world of undying loveliness. where the song of the Nightingale had been heard for centuries and will continue to be heard after this passing generation had been hounded to death by other generations. He was lost in the vision roused by the birds' song and he longed for death rather than disillusionment but before the disillusionment comes and before he is reawakened to the sordid realities of life, he has transcended the bonds of time and space and travelled to Bethlehem and the land of magical and romantic castles, where a beautiful princess

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held in captivity had been looking over the 'perilous foam' for the knight of her deliverance. As he wakes up from the vision, he can still hear the receding echoes of the 'plaintive anthem'.*

(ii) Grecian Urn

In the *Grecian Urn* he contrasts the unsatisfying human life with art, which is everlastingly beautiful. "The sight, or the imagination, of a piece of ancient sculpture had set the poet's mind at work on the one hand conjuring up the scenes of ancient life and worship which lay behind and suggested the sculptured images; and on the other, speculating on the abstract relations of plastic art to life".—(*Colvin*). What art loses in reality, it gains in permanence. Life is real but this reality is followed by satiety and decay. And in art, not only there is permanence in what is depicted on the urn, but there is also permanence in what is left out.

'And little town, the streets for evermore
Will silent be.'

Keats also shows a rare sympathy with the rituals of the ancient forms of worship, with their sacrificial offerings in which both gods and men took part, in which 'gods partook the weaknesses of mortals, and mortals, the enjoyment of gods.'

The contrast between art and life is sad, yet Keats closes this ode triumphantly, not, as in the *Nightingale* ode, on a note of disappointment. He consigns the work of ancient sculpture to the future generation, to whom it will deliver the oracular message of the identity of truth and beauty, which to Keats was an immutable law.

(iii) Ode on Melancholy

In the *Ode on Melancholy*, the perception is profound. Only those who are capable of experiencing the extremest joy will know what real melanchaly is. The poet finds the source of the deepest melancholy in eternal beauty. We are to look not on disease or death or poverty, but on the most beautiful objects which are only fast-fading manifestations of the everlasting principle of beauty. When a man experiences the same delight or when he is in possession of a thing of real beauty, the full bitterness of the contrast between the real and the ideal weighs him down and depresses him. If he had not known the great ideal of beauty or joy, he would not have felt the contrast so much. The same perception he shows in his famous *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, where the pale warrior, as he had been fed on manna dew and had sight of a beautiful vision, had to travel alone on the cold hill's side.

In St. II, according to Lord Houghton, melancholy is a 'luxrious tenderness', and in the closing stanza, it is strong and painful, which

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* Robert Bridges thinks that Keats 'loses hold of the main idea in the words *plaintive anthem* and *plaintive anthem* should mean here eager and tenderly passionate songs by which the Nightingale pours forth its soul abroad.

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he communicates with his characteristic magnificence of style and imagery.

(iv) Ode to Psyche

The *Ode to Psyche* is rightly famous for the recreation of the ancient pagan faith with its fervour of devotion, its sense-appealing rituals, its unquestioning character and its appeal to our imagination. Combined with this instinctive perception of a faith long since dead is his love of nature, of the flowers 'cool-rooted' and 'fragrant eyed' which gratify all human senses. As in *The Eve of St. Agnes*—

'The carved angels, ever eager-eyed
Star'd,'

the flowers here look on the immortal lovers and fill them with their odour and seem to have a life of their own.

Keats by now was a master of the invention of felicitous compound epithets. The structural perfection of a human ear and the softness of a young maiden's flesh are combined in 'soft-conched' ear. 'Cool-rooted', fragrant-eyed', 'moss-lain', allare singularly happy epithets and a wealth of meaning is compressed in them.

The concluding stanza gives incidentally a graphic description of an Alpine scenery. The temple to be dedicated to Psyche will be built on some 'untrodden region' of his mind,

'Where branched thoughts, new grown with
pleasant pain
... ...
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep.'

He reveals not only the mystery of 'pleasant pain' in all kinds of creative activity but with remarkable power he gives an impressive picture of the Alpine mounains with their grandeur and desolation.

(v) Ode to Autumn

The *Ode to Autumn*, written in September 1819, is a record of his quiet days at Winchester. It is not the last poem that Keats wrote, but it was the last of the poems he wrote at the height of his powers. In execution, the completest of all his Odes, it expresses such a serene and untroubled mood that we vainly wish that it might have been his last word to us. In this unparalleled description of a rich autumnal day with its long twilight and glowing sunset, he conveys to us all the peace and quiet and beauty which his soul receives. It does not reach the marvellous heights which is attained by the *Ode on a Grecian Urn or* the intensity of mood of the *Nightingale* with its splendid richness and variety but in execution it is the most perfect. The three stanzas reveal the bounty of autumn, the pictures of autumn and its pensive music with the rarest economy of words and every picture music has a clear definiteness of outline rarely to be found in romantic poetry. Its classic economy is inded its source of beauty. All the words seem to possess nature's perfection, and, but for the opening line of Stanza III, there seems to be no flaw anywhere.

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The contrast between Keats and Shelley in their attitude towords the autumnal season is significant. Shelley would like to share the ardour of the west wind of autumn so as to shake the whole world, whereas Keats seems to be absorbing the quiet and serene mood of autumn with his whole soul. From the most glorious description of an autumnal storm, Shelley passes on to a superb self-delineation and from thence to prophetic exaltation. Shelley takes only one aspect, the west wind, and desires to be filled with its might, but Keats perceives all tha wealth and bounty of autumn in its vegetative aspect and like a true Greek, he is in the company of the familiar pictures. If you have seen the harvester, the reaper, the gleaner or the cider-marker, you have known autumn. Finally, he leads us to the plaintive music of an autumnal twilight.

The warmth of stubble-plains, the rich glow of the setting-sun illumining the bars of clouds in the autumnal sky, the golden apples. the honey flowers—everything seems to have filled his soul with peace and quiet, and under the influence of nature he knows that beauty once seen and perceived is one's possession for ever.

(10) Posthumons and Fugitive Poems

Among the poems published after his death, special notice should be taken of the *Ode on Indolence*, composed in the spring of 1819, *Fragment of* an *Ode to Maia*, *Written on May-day* 1818, *Meg Merrilies*, a ballad, the result of his Scottish tour, *The Eve of St. Mark*, a few Sonnets and the famous *La Belle Dame sans Merci.*

(i) Ode on Indolence

The *Indolence Ode* is the picturing of a transient mood and may be the description of a half-wakeful vision. 'Poet's food is love and fame' but these lose their arresting charm in a mood of lethargy, so also the 'demon poesy', 'masden most unmeek' cannot now subdue him and he desires to surrender himself now to daydreams and nightly vision of which there is a vast store. Though the Ode has some forceful and felicitous phrases, Keats did not include it in the 1820 volume, possibly considering it inferior in execution to the other odes.

(ii) May Ode

'The fragment of the *May Ode*' is immortal on account of the famous passage of inimitable beauty descriptive of the Greek poets—

'Leaving great verse unto a little clan.' —(*Robert Bridges*).

The poet shows his instinctive understanding of the nature and life of the ancient poets.

'Who died content on pleasant sword'

and never coveted a memorial or a mausoleum and were happy to have a few devoted listeners with perfect ears. Keats prays to Maia for their heavenly life on earth, their vigour and sweetness.

(iii) Meg Merrilies

Keats owes his spirited ballad of *Meg Merrilies* to Brown who had introduced the subject of Sir Walter Scott's 'Old Gipsy' while

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travelling through Guy Mannering's country. Keats with his quick observation of the beauty of broom, blackberries, craggy hill and larchen trees at once composed,

'Old Meg she was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors.'

(iv) The Eve of St. Mark

The Eve of St. Mark, unfinished, allied with *The Eve of St. Agnes*, in its mediaeval blending of blind faith and mystery, is the forerunner of some of Morris's best descriptions.

(v) La Belle Dame sans Merci

La Bell Dame sans Merci was composed probably in the spring or summer of 1819. The title is taken from a poem of Alain Chartier, a French court poet of the 15th century, of the court of Charles VI and Charles VII. Sir Richard Ros had translated the poem, but Keats is indebted to Alain Chartier only for the title, which had a strange fascination for him, obvious from the following lines in *The Eve of St. Agnes* :

'An ancient ditty long since mute
In Provence call'd '*La Belle Dame sans Merci.*'

Just as Chartier had nothing to do with Provence, Keats also owes nothing excepting the title to Chartier's poem, which is 'a prolix conversation between an obdurate lady and her lover, at the close of which she goes away indifferent to dance and play, he is desperate to tear his hair and die.'

Keats's ballad is the touchstone of pure poetry and is 'a masterpiece of horror-stricken reticence and magical suggestion.'—(*Herford*). What a combination of the rarest simplicity and economy is found in 'And no birds sing', and what a stupendous effect is produced by the employment of four monosyllables ! The impression is immediate, final and permanent.'—(*Rossetti*).

Coleridge specially in *Kubla Khan*, was Keats's predecessor in the romanticism of weird suggestion, but Keats surpasses him and all others by his consummate mastery in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. The universal heart of man speaks through its simple words. It is not merely the soul of the poet in the thraldom of love, but the soul of every lofty idealist, which experiences infinite agony and is doomed to 'loiter palely and alone' though

'The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing'

the knight-at-arms represents the chivalrous, romantic and visionary aspirations of each one of us. By the repetition of 'pale', Keats invests the vision with the impressiveness of Dante.

If one has once seen the vision beatific, or has been fed on 'honey wild and manna—', or if one has in Coleridge's language, 'drunk the milk of Paradise', he is doomed to infinite suffering and desolation ; which is precisely the meaning of the terrible warning

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given by his predecessors, 'pale kings and princes' who had suffered like him in the past.

"Pale warriors, death-pale were they all :
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci'
Hath thee in thrall !,'

The effect of the warning is heightened by the infinitely suggestive words like 'starved' and 'gaped' :

'I saw their starved lips in the gloom
With horrid warning gaped wide.'

Of the shorter poems, it is undoubtedly Keats's masterpiece, which William Morris acknowledges as "the germ from which all the poetry of my group has sprung.'

(vi) Sonnets

Keats's sonnets impress the readers by their varied character. The earlier ones are mostly Italian in verse form, in the later ones the Shakespearean form predominates, but in all of them is a felicity of expression, a manner, which is truly Shakespearean. The greater number of his early sonnets are occasional, reflective or dedicatory poems whereas in the closing period, the true sonnet predominates. They are mostly distinguished by a total absence of self-consciousness which is the real bane of sonnets. The most well-known, and deservedly too, is one of his earliest sonnets, the one beginning 'Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold', 'When I have fears', 'The Human Seasons', 'Bright star', 'As Hermes once', To one who hath been long in city pent', 'Time's sea', 'To sleep' and 'Why did I laugh tonight'—are some of his famous sonnets.

(vii) The Fall of Hyperion

Sir Sidney Colvin ably summarizes the closing chapter of his life in the following words : 'Of the triple flame which was burning away his life, the flame of genius, of passion, and of disease, while the last kept smouldering in secret, the second burnt everyday more fiercely, and the first began from this time forth to sink'. 'His bright hopes of poetic attainment were fading from him and his voice was soon to be silenced for ever. He wanted to do some hack-work independent of his poetry but he courted only disappointment in the effort. The most productive period of his poetry from September 1818 to September 1819, which Robert Gittings calls the *Living Year* was an end. In the daytime he engaged himself in writing *Cap and Bells* in the Byronic vein, but banter and his poetical genius would not go together. When fatigued and distracted, he would start at night the work of reconstructing his *Hyperion*. The revised version, unfinished like *Cap and Bells*, owing to his death, is *The Fall of Hyperion, A Dream*.

There is a notable change of style in the revision. He makes a deliberate effort to leave out invocations and Miltonic inversions. On the whole, the style aims at 'greater severity' and a more thoughtful power than that influence of Dante not only in the gravity of the

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vision of in any of Keats's earlier work. Robert Bridges traces the influence of Dante not only in the gravity of the vision of the poem but also in his style.

'When in mid-way the sickening East wind
Shifts sudden to the South, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers.'

—(ll. 97-99, *The Fall of Hyperion*, Canto I).

or, when written words are described as 'The shadows of melodius utterance'. Dante's 'especial grace' discernible. There are grave faults too in his new manner, but they are inevitable in a transitional period through which he was passing in the autumn of 1819.

The speech of Oceanus in Book II of the original *Hyperion* indicates that there is a 'self-destructive progress in nature towards good' and that beauty and not force is the eternal law of this change. 'When the change takes place, it is the height of wisdom or the 'top of sovereignty'.

.....'To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm.'

—(*ll.* 203-204, *Hyperion*; Book II).

This 'top of sovereignty' will be given as a reward to those who will face the realities of life and this idea is elaborated in the revised version. The inward distresses of his mind are revealed in many startling passages. Moneta says that none can usurp the height

'But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest'.

—(*ll.* 148-149, *The Fall of Hyperion*, Canto I),

Moneta further warns the poet,

'Thou art a dreaming thing,
A fever of thyself—think of the Earth'.

He can approach the goddess and commune with her only if he shares all the troubles of the earth and makes them his own. That is Shakespearean empathy. And that is Keats too.

7. INFLUENCES ON KEATS

It is a difficult task to bring into the light all the influences that shape the vision, and colour the writing of a poet or writer. Nevertheless, it is a fruitful study to bring out the major influences on a particular poet. Keats's letters and poems clearly hint at the major influences operating upon him. They are discussed below.

The Influence of Spenser

Keats began his poetic career under Spenser's influence with a copy of *The Faerie Queene* which had a spell on him. He wrote a poem in 1813—*Imitation of Spenser*—that clearly shows the influence of Spenser on him. He derived from Spenser a frank and unashamed response to nature's endless beauty. *Endymion* too is largely Spenserian. Keats has also made use of the Spenserian stanza in a number of poems.

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The Influence of Leigh Hunt

"The influence of Leigh Hunt was helpful and liberalizing at the beginning, but later, it proved inhibitory. What at first attracted Keats, as many other young minds of the age, to Hunt was the latter's radicalism in politics, philosophy and morality. Soon after their first meeting at Clarkes's, Keats and Hunt became friends and often competed with each other in writing poems on some agreed subjects. Hunt recognized Keats's genius and offered the poet all the encouragement that Keats's young sensitive mind needed, and Keats even wrote a sonnet on Hunt when the latter was released after two years of imprisonment." But afterwards Keats realized that Hunt's radicalism was just a show.

The Influence of Shakespeare

The influence of Shakespeare was the deepest. Keats started reading Shakespeare from his childood. In 1818, in a letter to John Taylor, Keats wrote : "Thank God ! I can read and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths." For a while Hunt's influence distracted Keats from Shakespeare, but when his growing experiences of life made him disillusioned to Hunt, he returned to Shakespeare. *On Sitting Down to Read King Lear* is a sonnet that shows the depth of the influence *Lear* had made on Keats. It is from Shakespeare that he learnt that joy and sorrow exist side by side and that it is impossible to seek a romantic escape from the problems of life.

It was with reference to Shakespeare that he evolved his theory of 'Negative Capability' which he considered to be the distinctive feauture of a man of genius. There is also an influence of the Shakespearean diction on him. In his sonnets also Keats in the later phase began to follow Shakespeare.

The Influence of Milton

Milton's influence on Keats, though at one time very deep, was short-lived. Keats had read Milton from his school-days, but he made Milton his mainstay when his life's circumstances turned most agonizing. It was when Tom was on his death-bed succumbing to death and George had left for America, his financial position was critical, and his love was in doubt. In such circumstances, he made the *Paradise Lost* his refuge. In order to escape from personal pain, he wrote *Hyperion* on the model of Milton's epic.

But soon he grew dissatisfied with Milton finding that he could not escape from pain. But the Latinisms of Milton, and his music and sonnets had a considerable influence on him. He declared : "Milton is the corruptor of English language." Hence, in the second version of *Hyperion*, he tried his best to weed out all Miltonic echoes and traces, and adopted Shakespeare as his model.

The Influence of Wordsworth and Shelley

Keats was also influenced by fellow-contemporary poets. But the influence of Wordsworth and Shelley was deeper than those of other romantic poets. Keats approached Wordsworth as a pioneer

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who had liberated poetry from the shackles of the eighteenth century conventions, and had brought poetry close to Nature. In a letter to Reynolds, Keats called Wordsworth "a genius and superior to us, insofar as he can, more than we, make discoveries, and shed a light in them." But he did not like Wordsworth's philosophizings which he found disagreeable. Keats further discarded Wordsworth's egoism. However, Keats was influenced by Wordsworth's diction. There is something of Wordsworth's *The World is Too Much with Us* in Keats's *Sleep and Poetry*, of Wordsworth's *Nun's Fret Not* in Keats's sonnet *To Solitude*, and of Wordsworth's ninth sonnet in *Miscellaneous Sonnets* in Keat's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

"As for Shelly, Keats was never in any sympathy with him. Shelley's haughty demeanour repulsed Keats, though Shelley is said to have been an appreciator, though only in a patronizing manner of of Keats's poetry.

The Influence of the Classical Greek Literature

Keats came into contact with Greek myth and legends already at his school, Clarke's Academy through Lamprier's *Classical Dictionary*. Keats read Ovid's *Metamorphosis* with great enthusiasm. The influence of the classical Greek literature cannot be found in any concrete elements in his poetry : it is there in his spirit, and the nature of poetic inspiration. When Shelley called Keats "a Greek,", he referred to Keats's love of form and sensuous beauty, of his describing nature in terms of living, throbbing beings. Nature, to him, was a living world which could be shared by man through his imaginative power. The supernatural beings were not unreal ; they were real to imagination. Thus, in poetic inspiration Keats was romantic but in execution he showed the perfection of a Greek classical artist.

Homer captivated his youthful mind. Greek sculpture and myths also had a deep influence on him. Keats was a Greek in the simplicity and directness of expression of his best work, the inestimable quality of Homer and the Greek tragedians.

8. KEATS'S THEORY OF POETRY

Or

KEATS'S CONCEPT OF NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

Or

KEATS AS A THINKER

Keats's Conception of Poetry

Keats existed for the sake of poetry. Once he wrote to his friend Reynolds, "I find I cannot exist without poetry—without external poetry." He had a high conception of the function of poetry. In his opinion, the highest poetry.

'Should be a friend'
To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of men.

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Thus, the aim of poetry is to make man happier and better. Excellent poetry should be intense, "capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with beauty and truth." In short, poetry should delight people with its Beauty and elevate them with its Truth.

Keats as a Pure Poet

Keats was a pure poet. He believed in poetry for poetry's sake. In protest against the didactic verse of Wordsworth, he declares boldly : "We hate poetry that has palpable design upon us—poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul and does not startle it or amaze it with itself—but with its subject." Keats is not a philosophical poet like Milton and Wordsworth. But Keats may be called a philosophical poet as mentioned by Norman Hawlings in the sense in which his poetry questions about life, about the nature of poetry, about the character and function of a poet, and about the relationship of Imagination, Truth and Beauty. Nevertheless, his method is essentially poetic—instinctive, intuitive and spontaneous. "He eschews propaganda, politics and morality." He once wrote that he loved the principle of beauty in all things, and his aim in poetry was to express that beauty. He reveals in his poetry the hidden delights of nature, the true spirit of antiquity, and the magic charm of the Middle Ages.

Keats further believed that poetry should be spontaneous. Poetry grows as do the leaves of a tree, spontaneously. This was another axiom of Keats. He rejected all kinds of artificiality. Yet there is a dichotomy between his theory and practice. His poetry is laboured; he believes in the felicity of expression.

Negative Capability

Keats believes in Negative Capability. He develops the concept of Negative Capability in a letter : "...It is not itself,—it has no self" —it is everything and it is nothing. It has no character, it enjoys light and shade, it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the philosopher, delights the chameleon poet. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity—he is continually in, for, and filling some other body.

The poet is like a chameleon. He assumes like the chameleon various colours. He has no identity. He is continually filling some other body. He enjoys with equal relish pain and pleasure. The poet accepts the whole of life. He identifies himself with the objects he is treating. The poet merges himself in the very subject. The two become one and the result is the sweet wholesomeness.

Keats found this quality at its fullest in Shakespeare. "It struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature—I mean Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable

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of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."

The universal sympathy is found after Shakespeare in Keats. He is thus called Shakespearean. In yet another letter addressed to Bailey, Keats throws some light on the nature of Negative Capability —"Men of genius are great as certain ethereal chemicals operating on the mass of neutral intellect.....they have not any individuality, any determined character." Keats is again thinking of Shakespeare. What Keats means is that poets should not impose their own ego and petty private worlds on to their readers. They are catalysts who create a reaction between poetry and reader, but who themselves remain unobtrusive.

"Negative capability means the capability of negating oneself." This can be possible only when the character of the poet is not confirmed, when he has no ego and not any philosophy. Browning and Hardy who are confirmed optimist and pessimist cannot have Negative Capability. The character of the poet should be flexible rather than confirmed. He should be a thoroughfare—open to all sorts of experience. He should possess the capacity of annihilating himself and merging himself completely, for the time being, into the object of treatment. The object and subject should be identified. Shakespeare had no character of his own. He always identified himself with his characters. He was Hamlet, Macbeth, Iago, Portia, Desdemona, Falstaff, and yet he was none of them. He was Shakespeare.

Keats was the true disciple of Shakespeare. He was capable of entering wholly into the very being of his creations so that it had this capability all his life. His friends remarked how he could understand events for outside himself as if he had become the bird. Another time he spoke about a fall of rain in such a way that he seemed, somehow magically, to know just how a plant must feel with the rain on it.

Keats's odes are supreme example of this capability. In the *Ode on Indolence* neither love nor ambition, nor poetry makes it worth while to give up the luxurious enjoyment of the moment. None of them is—

> "So sweet as drowsy noons
> And evenings steep'd in honied indolence
> O, for an age so sheltered from annoy,
> That I may never know how change the moons,
> Or hear the voice of busy common sense."

In another ode to *Autumn* the poet merges himself with the spirit of Autumn. He becomes in turn a reaper sitting careless on a granary floor, and a gleaner keeping the laden head steady across a brook. The poet finds gusto in light as well as in shade. He does not care for spring when he treats of autumn. Only for a moment the question raises its head—

> "Where are the songs of spring ?"

But it is immediately stilled—

> "Think not of them, thou hast thy music too."

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Role of Imagination

Keats attached great importance to imagination, as Coleridge attached importance to fancy. The negative capability of a true poet is not the result of any intellectual process; it results from imagination. Keats was always suspicious of reason; he believed in imagination alone. In one of his letters he writes, "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be true." Poetry can create Beauty through imagination. Like Shakespeare, Keats himself "was of imagination compact". It was with the help of his rich imagination that he could make his poems spontaneous.

Life and Its Suffering

Keats as a thinker is better seen in his realization that poetry of the highest order should not divorce itself from life. Great poetry can be achieved only when the poet has passed numerous ordeals and sufferings and has attained maturity. No doubt, in his earlier phase, he craved for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts, but he soon grew tired of sensuousness. In his early poem, *Sleep and Poetry*, he writes :

"And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife,
Of human hearts."

Highest poetry can be achieved only by those :

"To whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest."

In a letter he compared life to a large mansion with many chambers. The first chamber is the Thoughtless Chamber, the second is the Chamber of Maiden Thought, and from this second chamber there open out many doors leading to dark passages. The first, Thoughtless Chamber, represents the sensuous stage, the stage in which the poet does not care to think but is absorbed in pleasures of the senses. The second chamber of Maiden Thought represents the second stage in the growth of a poet. It is now that the poet begins to think. During this stage, there is shaping of one's vision into the nature and heart of man—of convincing one's nerves that the world is full of misery, of pain and sickness. The dark passages opening out of the second chamber represent the stage when the poet has acquired wisdom enough to lift, in the words of Wordsworth, "Burthen of Mystery". Keats himself could grow only out of the first stage. His letters and his poetry clearly reveal that, "he was ever vacillating between the senses and the mind."—(*Garrod*). Contact with human suffering—the illness and death of his brother, his own ill-health, financial difficulties, hopelessness in love, his fierce criticism as a poet by the reviewers of his time, etc.—gave him experience and wisdom. The maturity of thought as expressed in his poetry also grew with the maturity in his age, although he died quite young. He came to the conclusion that Joy rests with Sorrow, and that Melancholy dwells with Beauty.

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9. NATURE AND THE SENSES

(Keats's Sensuousness)

Wordsworth

No one, not even Keats, escaped completely the influence of Wordsworth's attitude towards nature in the early nineteenth century. Black, Burns and Wordsworth had attributed human feelings to lower animals and Keats in his *Ode to Autumn* imagines that summer will never end as the store of honey in the late summer flowers seems inexhaustible. This is not merely thinking but thinking logically which faculty the bees are imagined to possess, and such passages might have been influenced by Wordsworth's nature poetry. Except for such passages, Keats's sympathy with nature is not of 'the reflective and ethical order.'

Keats emphatically repudiated the didacticism of Wordsworth, who said, 'Every great poet is a teacher ; I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing. Keats, on the other hand, hated poetry 'that has a palpable design upon us. Poetry must be unobtrusive, a thing of beauty which is a joy for ever. Thus, poetry should be beautiful and delightful according to him.

Uniqueness

The French Revolution was one of the greatest upheavals which influenced all poets some way or the other. Keats was the solitary exception. Burns had voiced the democratic mood of the Revolution by his impassioned declamation—

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

The excesses of the Girondist regime had filled Wordsworth's mind with a revulsion and having lost all interest in the political destiny of mankind, he turned to Nature for solace, which ultimately reconciled him to Humanity. Since then Wordsworth was continually reflecting upon the moral law of the universe which would apply to both nature and man. His romanticism was thus an interpretation of the spiritual wonders of life, an attempt to 'see into the life of things'. He was never tired of writing poetry with 'a palpable design', which repelled Keats, the youthful and ardent lover of beauty.

The failure of the Revolution was followed by an epoch of disillusionments, disgust, cynicism and distrust of all human institutions, political and social, and Byron is the greatest exponent of this spirit. By his Titanic fury, his iconoclastic zeal, his theatrical attitudinizings, Byron captured the mind of Europe and was acclaimed as a lion among men. His fame eclipsed that of all his contemporaries and much of the fire and fury of his denunciation is now lost on us, and Keats's characterization of Byron as 'a fine thing' in the sphere of 'the worldly, theatrical and pantomimical' is surprisingly shrewd and correct.

Keats had no sympathy either with Shelley's humanitarianism,

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his prophetic passion, or his passion for regenerating the world. It is true that in Shelley, the prophet was developed much earlier than the poet and he possibly deserved Keats's reprimand for his preoccupation with propagandist purposes : "You will, I am sure, forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore." Not that Keats always did so, but his *Ode to Autumn* clearly shows that he could follow the advice which he had given to Shelley who was three years older.

No Ulterior Aim

Wordsworth drew moral inspiration and spiritual sustenance from nature, Shelley would like to share its impetuosity so that he might bring about the golden age and Byron its destructive fury. Keats does not philosophize. He holds his breath with wonder and delight at the sights and sounds of nature. His love for nature is spontaneous, intense, passionately simple and divested of any ulterior aim. No ethical, metaphysical or spiritual purpose mingled with his worship of the beauty that is in nature. He loved her purely for her own sake and painted her not with reason but with imagination, which was continually enlivened by his senses.

Sensuousness

"Poetry, according to Milton's famous saying, should be simple, sensuous, impassioned. No one can question the eminency in Keats's poetry of the quality of sensuousness. Keats as a poet is abundantly and enchantingly sensuous."—(*Arnold*). One might quote examples from his poetry to show that he was completely under the domination of his senses and was nothing else. In a letter he exclaims ; 'O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts !' In another letter, he remarks, with a great poet the sense of Beauty obliterates every other consideration. Whether Keats was to confine himself merely to the worship of Beauty as perceived by the senses or come to the realization of the Beauty of human action or of the human soul is, however, a different question. But the fact remains that the senses filled a very significant part in his perception of Beauty.

(i) Eye

When we say that he is the poet of

'Light foot, dark violent eyes, and parted hair,
Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast'

we only focus attention on the dominance of sight, of beauty as perceived by the eyes. But in the case of Keats, it is not sight alone, not the eyes alone, but all the senses contributed to his perception of the beautiful. His poetry has rarely been equalled in description of the beauties perceptible to the senses, such as form, colour, perfume or music. It was his mission to interpret the highest type of sensuous beauty. In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the form of the urn as perceived by the eyes captures his imagination. The 'flowery tale' the 'leaf-

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fring'd legend', the 'Attic shape', the breed of marble men and maidens, are all perceived by the eyes. A part from love of form, the eyes led him to luxuriate like a painter in an assembly of colours. In the following lines from his *Ode to Autumn*,

'.....to load and bless,
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run,
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,'

the greenery of the vine-leaves, the grey colour of the thatched-roof of the cottages, the golden yellow of the mature apples and the emerald moss provide a feast of varied colours to the imagination of the poet-painter.

(ii) Touch

What Milton precisely meant by his definition that poetry is a sensuous art, is easily classified by examples from Keats's poetry. Keats could not stay long in the domain of the abstract and as in Spenser's images, all abstractions give place to the concrete. The opening passage of *The Eve of St. Agnes* illustrates the point,

"St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was !
The owl for all his feathers, was a-cold ;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass."

The cold touch of the chilly January night could not have been better communicated. There is the language of pure poetry. That is poetry as a sensuous art as Milton meant it.

Haydon tells us how Keats once 'covered his tongue and throat as far as he could reach with Cayenne pepper, in order to appreciate the delicious coldness of claret.' In a letter to his sister, he mentions 'a little claret wine, cool out of a cellar a mile deep.' It is the same Keats who longed for

"...a draught of vintage ! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth."

Cover a rosebud round the tampering end of your finger and 'smooth it against thy lips.' That a simple, direct communication of our sense-impressions can have far-reaching effect on our imagination will be clear from the following passage of an essay of Robert Lynd on '*Cold*'. 'The owl for all his feathers was a-cold. Even so I envied him his feathers as I lay in bed and thought of the bleak and bitter February morning outside into which I should before long have to go. How pleasant to be so well-clad by nature as not to have to get up and dress !'

(iii) Smell

Owing to the dense foliage of the beech trees, Keats cannot see what flowers are at his feet, but by smell he can guess each sweet plant or blossom with which the month has endowed the grass, the thicket and the wild fruit-tree, white hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine and fast-fading violets, and he can guess what soft incense

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hang upon the boughs in the scented darkness. The sense of smell helps him to recreate the pious atmosphere of the pagan rituals in his *Ode to Psyche* :

".....incense sweet,
From chain-swung censer teeming."

Both the senses of touch and smell are gratified by the perfume of fruits and syrups which he lovingly enumerates in *The Eve of St. Agnes* :

'While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, than plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon :
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez : and spiced dainties... ... ...

... ...

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light."

(iv) Tongue

The tongue is one of the most sensitive organs and in the case of Keats, it was still more so as will be evident from the closing passage of his *Ode on Melancholy* :

"Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against palate fine."

(v) Ear

The ear is as much an inlet of beauty as the eye to the poet. His ear missed nothing from the voice of the grasshoppers in summer when 'all the birds are faint with the hot sun' to the shrill cricket's song 'on a lone winter evening.' That is why 'the poetry of earth is never dead' to him. Autumn also regales his ear with its characteristic music, beautifully mournful—the buzzing of the gnats, louder when the wind blows, more subdued when the wind ceases to blow—the plaintive bleating of the lambs standing on the hilly bourn in the fading light of an autumnal evening, the chirping of the grasshoppers among the hedges, the soft treble of the robin in the orchard and the twittering of the swallows exercising their wings in the the sky above so as to be ready for their winter migration.

The nightingale has inspired many poets from Milton to Robert Bridges but Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* is deservedly the most well-known. This romantic Ode has made the song of the nightingale

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as immortal as the poet himself. The song is full-throated, but is accompanied by perfect ease, the spontaneity of a consummate artist. The bird is the Dryad of the tress which has made the beechen plot melodious and the note is full of assertion, promise and expectancy, and it was heard by emperor or clown in ancient times, and it had penetrated the sad heart of Ruth or gladdened the ears of a princess held in duress, in a desolate castle on perilous seas and awaiting liberation by her lover who will defy the waves for the sake of love. The nightingale makes the poet forget all the fever and the fret, and the poet passes into a blissful union with its spirit, but this divine spell unfortunately cannot last for ever and the poet is brought back to his 'sole self, as the passionate anthem of the bird fades away in the vernal valleys. His perfect ear could hear the pattering of the sleet just as much as the humming of the flies on summer eves :

"meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum, pattering the sharp sleet
Bgainst the window-panes."

The total impression of his nature poetry is that of youthfulness and as he died young he remains enduringly the poet of rapt expecttation and passionate delight in nature which absorbed and gratified all his senses. 'Keats discovers', says Bridges, 'in the most usual objects either beauty or sources of delight or comfort, or sometimes even of imaginative horror, which are all new ; and here his originality seems inexhaustible, and his wide poetic sympathies the strongest. Nor does he confine himself to matters of which he could have had much experience ; he makes Nature the object of his imaginative faculty—Nature apart from man, or related to man as an enchantress to a dreamer.' This accounts for the wealth of images in *Endymion* which sometimes fatigue the reader.

10. HELLENISM OF KEATS

Meaning of Hellenism

The ancient Greeks called their country *Hellas* and themselves *Hellenes*, the name of a tribe that in the time of pre-historic migrations had settled in a part of Thessaly. *Graecia* was a name given by the Romans to *Hellas*, Hellenism is a derivative from Hellas and is a familiar word in literary criticism, very frequently used in connection with Milton. Keats or Swinburne. Hellenism with its passion for beauty is sometimes contrasted with Hebraism, the influence of the Bible, with its emphasis on moral rigour or the value of disciplinary forces. The opposition, however, is more apparent than real. It is generally admitted that modern European civilization is a harmonious blend of three factors, the philosophy of ancient Greece, Christianity and the jurisprudence of Rome. But in the case of individuals, the blend is not usually so harmonious. A notable exception, however, is Milton, in whom the renaissance and reformnation forces blend inextricably. He is steeped in the influence of classical literature so much so that his classical learning in the language of Hartley.

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Coleridge is amalgamated and consubstantiated with his native genius. At the same time all his poetical works are interfused with the sublimity and moral grandeur of Christian thought. But Milton was a class by himself. The vast erudition of Ben Jonson or of Milton has hardly any parallel. In a different way, the case of John Keats is still more unique.

A Born Greek

He was born in the house of a London ostler in the most unpoetical surroundings. His antecedents and environments were not at all favourable for the fostering of Hellenism. Like Shakespeare, Keats had 'little Latin and less Greek'. Shelley, when asked how Keats could have references to a Grecian story in his *Hyperion*, replied, 'Because he was a Greek.' Nothing could be truer than this epigrammatic utterance, the significance of which Shelley himself probably but half comprehended. He was not a Greek by education. He did not know Greek at all and his knowledge of Greek literature was derived from English translations only. There was nothing of Greek culture in his heritage either. But he was irresistibly drawn towards everything that was Greek. That shows that his Hellenism was innate or he was a born Greek, a Greek by instinct, a Greek owing to the inborn temperamental 'Greekness of his mind'.

Greek Literature

That Homer, the blind epic poet of ancient Greece, had captivated his youthful mind is clear from one of the fugitive pieces, the *Sonnet to Homer*, which begins thus :

"Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
At one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas."

Homer came to him through Chapman's translation. Chapmans *Iliad*, though 'animated by a daring fiery spirit' is not always 'loud and bold' and Palgrave's luminous comment is well worth remembering : 'It may be noticed that to find in Chapman's Homer the *pure serene* of the original, the reader must bring with him the imagination of the youthful poet ;—he must be a *Greek himself* as Shelley finely said of Keats.' The famous sonnet was written at dawn after a whole night spent over the *Iliad* :

"Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold ;
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken."

As Keats says his intellectual horizon was widened by Homeric poetry, even though he had known Homer through translation. No poet has been able to recapture the spirit of ancient Greek poetry

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with a greater insight and a surer touch than Keats in his unfinished *Fragment of an Ode to Maia written on Mayday, 1818.*

Greek Sculpture

It was Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), an historical painter who had introduced him to the Elgin Marbles, derived chiefly from the frieze and padiment of the Parthenon at Athens, the work of Phidias (*c.* 440 B. C.). They were collected by the Earl of Elgin (1766-1841) and placed in the British Museum in 1816. Keats's interest was immediately roused. He was impressed by its majesty, its simplicity and symmetry, its 'calm grandeur' and economy.

The sight of these marbles had not caused merely a momentary pleasure but it exercised a far-reaching influence on Keats's own poetic art. It gave a more potent turn to his poetry than any other external influence. Some of the qualities of this 'Phidian lore' are reflected in his *Hyperion*. Two of his famous odes, *On Indolence* and *On a Grecian Urn*, are directly inspired by these examples of an ancient Greek sculpture. To him, the Grecian Urn is a symbol of the external principle of beauty and has an oracular message for humanity in all ages, a massage as deep as the infinite. In his mood of indolence, Love, Ambition and the Demonical Poesy appear before him. As they baffle recognition, Keats remembers the inscrutable character of the figures on a marble vase. In a sonnet, *To Haydon, written on Seeing the Elgin Marbles* he offers an enthusiastic tribute to him for his early recognition of the genuineness of the collection and in the sonnet *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles*, he refers to the mingling of 'Grecian grandeur with the rude wasting of old Time.'

Keats did not fight his own age, from which he affected an imaginative escape, not into a future land like Shelley, but into the past of Greek art or mythology. In the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, he declares the supremacy of ideal art over Nature or life because of its unchanging expression of perfection. 'For whatever Art may sacrifice of the loveliness and freshness of Nature, it attains permanence which Nature attains not.'

> "Ah, happy boughs ! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever did the Spring adieu."

Greek Mythology

Keats had studied Virgil's *Aeneid* even in his thirteenth year and he had set forth to translate the *Aeneid* into English prose. The discovery of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Chapman's translation had opened up to him the great wonderland of legend, a 'wide expanse' which Homer ruled. But it is nothing short of the alchemy of the genius which could transform the prosaic passages of Lempriere's *Classical Dictionary* into the pure gold of poetry. When at school, he seemed to have learnt it by heart. No one ever looked into a dictionary with greater zeal. He felt the charm of Greek and Roman myth also in Tooke's *Pantheon* and Spencer's *Polymetis*.

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That he had borrowed subjects from Greek mythology for his *Endymion* and *Hyperion* is not so significant as his total absorption in the spirit of ancient mythology, which, indeed, is a kind of primitive poetry. The ancient mind both in the Indus valley and in the Aegean islands expressed its poetical feeling of wonder, awe and fear by attributing human passions to inanimate objects like the trees of the forest, the waves of the sea, the stars and planets. Keats had the fullest sympathy and the most vital response for the outmoded polytheism of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The pantheism of the ancient Greeks embodies the instinctive effort of a gifted human race to interpret its earliest experience of nature, at times cruel, at times kindly, which controls and environs our life on earth. This world of Greek paganism lives again in his verse with its frank sensuousness and joys of life, with its mysterious oracular messages and eternal questionings of the natural world. With unrivalled felicity he recreates the blind faith and fervour of the ancient pagans and the sensuous character of their rituals in his *Ode to Psyche.*

"So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours ;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming ;
The shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming."

Keats could rightfully claim that he is 'more orthodox than to let a heathen goddess be so neglected.'

Anthropomorphic Faculty

The faculty of imagination which attributes human qualities to the objects of nature may be called anthropomorphic. In mythology, Indian or Greek, this faculty finds the fullest play. If you are in a forest you are surrounded by Dryads, if you are bathing in the sea, you have the Nereids as your companions. It is Triton who blows his 'wreathed horn' or Proteus who is responsible for the many appearances of the sea. Keats possessed this anthropomorphic faculty to a very remarkable degree. He hardly ever remained long in the domain of the abstract, as one may find from his *Autumn* Ode. It is only in the first line that autumn is an abstraction or the 'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.' In the very second line, Autumn is found conspiring with the maturing sun as a close bosom-friend. And who can conspire excepting a human being ? In Stanza 2, Autumn appears as a harvester, a reaper, a gleaner and a cider maker. If you have seen the harvester, you have seen Autumn himself. Autumn is like a divinity in human shape and directs every operation of the season. These personifications are so different from the cold and frigid personfications of the eighteenth century poetry. Keats's Autumn is truly like Pan of Greek mythology, to whom we owe its vegetative plenty, its mellow fruitfulness, its familiar sights and its characteristic music.

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Passion for Beauty

Above all, he was a Greek on account of his passion for beauty. The Hellenes were lovers of beauty. The beauty in which Keats revelled was sensuous though imaginative and if he had lived longer, it was sure to be transformed into something deeper and richer. But it was no small achievement for a youthful poet to discern the identity of beauty and truth. To see things in their beauty is to know the whole truth about them.

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty that is all,
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Mattew Arnold rightly comments : "No, it is not all ; but it is true, and deeply true, and we have deep need to know it. And with beauty goes not only truth, joy goes with her also ; and this too Keats saw and said, as in the famous first line of his *Endymion*, it stands written —

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

It is no small thing to have so loved the principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with truth, and of both with joy."

It is this cult of beauty and of the joy of life which the ancient Greeks cultivated. They also cultivated the beauty of intellect and of character. Keats had unquestioningly accepted the principle of beauty governing all objects and having done so, he was sure to realize that beauty is not exclusively material or sensuous, not exclusively intellectual or spiritual material or sensuous, not exclusively intellectual or spiritual, but finds its expression in the fullest development of all that goes to make up human perfection.

Expression

Finally, Keats was a Greek in the simplicity and directness of expression of his best work, the inestimable quality of Homer and the Greek tragedians. In a few words or by the employment of a a few epithets he could, like the ancient Greeks, contrive to finish a picture of vast size. Examples are numerous. Notice the effect of the following lines from his Sonnet *On a Picture of Leander* :

> "'Tis young Leander toiling to his death ;
> Nigh swooning ; he doth purse his weary lips
> For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her smile,
> O horrid dream ! see how his body dips
> Dead-heavy ; arms and shoulders gleam awhile ;
> He's gone ; up bubbles all his amorous breath."

The tall oaks are to him the 'green-rob'd senators of mighty woods' and the description of Hyperion is a perfect example of the directness of expression of the ancient Greeks.

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"Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memmon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East."

Keats's instinctive appreciation of Greek literature and Greek mythology, his insight into the pagan mind, its complete abandon to the sensuous, its faith and fervour, his admiration for Greek sculpture its calm and symmetry, his passion for beauty and above all his simplicity and directness of expression, all these constitute the fundamental Greek quality of his mind.

11. KEATS AS A POET-PAINTER AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

(Keats's Pictorial Quality)

Historical Position

Historically, Keats is important specially for two reasons. In the first place, there is nothing of the eighteenth century didacticism in his poetry and so far as the form is concerned, even when he wrote in the heroic couplet, his enjambments gave his measure a fluidity which remind us of Chaucerian verse of Elizabethan blank verse. He is the most romantic of the romantic poets and even though he was a Greek in temper, there was nothing classic about his art, which is characterized by exuberance of images and want of restraint, *Endymion*, *Lamia* and *Hyperion* are based on classical stories, but their treatment is romantic, whereas *Isabella*, *The Eve of St. Agnes and La Belle Dame sans Merci* are mediaeval in subject-matter, and romance breathes freely through them all.

Secondly, his work marks a temporary cleavage between poetry and contemporary life. Historically, his poetry represents the exhaustion of the humanitarian impulses of the Revolution. These humanitarian impulses are most pronounced in Byron and Shelley and in Wordsworth though in an entirely different manner. In Keats's poetry, they are conspicuous by their absence and for this reason he seems to stand at the end of his epoch, though he died earlier than Shelley, Byron and others. The impulses of the Revolution had ceased to be a creative force and were shortly to be followed by other forces in the Victorian era.

Minor Poets

Before coming to the era of Tennyson and Browning or the Victorian era, we come across one or two minor poets who deserve notice on account of some characteristics, which they owe to Keats. Chief among them is Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849), who was ultraromantic like Keats. In him, too, the Elizabethan spirit was re-incarnated as in Keats. Besides the Elizabethan strain, we detect in Beddoes the note of Shelley and Keats. Beddoes has been called a

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'Gothic Keats, and possibly he was more allied to Keats than to Shelley. But the very union of Shelley and Keats was a characteristic of this epoch. There are, as one may easily see, wide differences between the two. The one is intellectual, the other sensuous. Shelley was filled with a prophetic zeal and reformist passion to which Keats was a total stranger. To him beauty was truth and he could never understand how truth could he reached by a process of reasoning. Beddoes was drawn to Shelley by his intellect, to Keats by his imagination. 'The same union of the Elizabethan spirit with something derived from Shelley and Keats both is to be found in the work of Charles Jeremiah Wells (1800-1879) and in that of Thomas Wade (1805-1875).' Another poet, Thomas Hood (1799-1845), who had married the sister of an intimate friend of Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds, shows traces of Keats's influences in his early poetry, in poems like *Lycus the Centaur* and the *Plea of Midsummer Fairies*. The mature Hood, however, was very different from Keats.

Tennyson, 1830

On the authority of his son, we know that Tennyson in the early period of his writing was influenced greatly by Keats, and he held him in the highest esteem and declared that 'there is something of the innermost soul of poetry in almost everything he wrote', which is certainly very true. Like Keats he was keenly alive to the suggestion of the senses. His early poems displayed also an 'excessive minuteness of observation' indicating the same sensitiveness to impression on which the style of Keats is based. The *Poems* of 1830 show a Keatsian worship of beauty, though he did not have Keats's fulness of conviction that Beauty is truth. Later, however, he set himself the task of establishing this identity—hence, follows the larger subjects which he took up later. Owing to very different contemporary forces, his genius started moving in different channels, but there are many like Edward FitzGerald and Coventry Patmore who never fully appreciated his poems published after 1842.

Tennyson, 1842

The two volumes of *Poems* published in 1842 mark a definite stage in the development of Tennyson's genius. Hallam's death and other cares and sorrows filled his poetry with a serious purpose, but the artist as inspired by Keats still remains as is evident from *Ulysses*, *Break, Break, Break* and *Morte d' Arthur*. These is the same gift of the fitting word and exquisite phrase, the same keen desire for perfection one finds in Keats. Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters* is a poem of sensuous indulgence and enjoyment and the mood enshrined in it is the same as that of Spenser's *Bower of Bliss*. Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* and Keats's *Ode on Indolence*. His verse is full of haunting suggestions of his predecessors in Greek, Latin, Italian and English, and of English poets his debt to Keats was undeniably great.

Poet-painter

If Keats had not been a poet, he would have been a painter. Many of his images suggest a definite picture as in Spenser to our

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mental eye. The straggling vine is called the 'gadding' vine by Milton, but in Keats's *Autumn*, 'the vines that round the thatcheves run' offers a distinct picture. The fleeting pleasures of life inspire a passage in *Sleep and Poetry* which would be remembered by all lovers of poetical images :

"The light uplifting of a maiden's veil,
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air ;
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm."

In cotrast with this, sometimes in Keats, a single epithet suggests a whole picture, for instance, 'full-throated ease' gives us the picture of the nightingale singing apparently with effort with its throat distended but really with complete absence of strain which must ever accompany all perfect art. In the same ode, 'purple-stained mouth' is a Bacchic expression suggesting the growing exhilaration of the drinker and the previous line 'beaded bubbles winking at the brim' gives a picture complete in all its details. The same effect is also produced by lines such as these :

"Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, and, last gray hairs."

The vividness of the picture of an old man, palsy-stricken, his hairs gray and few, standing and trembling as if it were on the verge of the tomb can hardly be surpassed.

Colours

Like a painter too, he luxuriated in an orgy of colours. In his *Autumn* Ode, the vine leaves are green, the moss is emerald, the apples are golden yellow and the thatched-roof is grey : Note the profusion of colours in the following passage from *Lamia*, Part I, where the serpent is described before she is transformed into a beautiful maiden by Hermes :

'She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermillion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd brighter shone, or, interwreathed
Their lustres with gloomier tapestries.'

Such profusion of details and orgy of colours earned for him the title of the father of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of a succeeding age. The casement of Madeline's chamber in *The Eve of St. Agenes* will defy a painter's skill, so full and varied are the details :

"A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,

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Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-demask'd wings :
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.
Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm glues on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon."

Pre-Raphaelites

Keats has been called the father of the Pre-Raphaelites which means that he anticipates the Pre-Raphaelite Brothers by his love of colours, by his abundance or profusion of pictorial details, in his poems by the definiteness of outline of his pictures, qualities which are found in mediaeval or Pre-Raphaelite painting, by his recreation of Catholic fervour as in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and by his mediaevalism as reflected in *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Isabella*, *Mag Merrilies* and *La Belle Dame sans Merci* ; and above all by the directness of his natural style. Who are these Pre-Raphaelites, and what did they aim to do, and what did they accomplish ? And how far is their debt to Keats, real or imagined ?

Pre-Raphaelite is a term which properly applies to the history of painting. In poetry it has no specific signification, but it indicates a certain phase of the romantic movement. The celebrated Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848. It included three painters and a sculptor. Dante Gabrial Rossetti was the moving spirit. He was a painter by profession and a poet for enjoyment and self-expression. It was his conviction that poetry had no future, that Keats was the last great English poet and that painting was the art of the future. The impulse which brought together the three painters, W. H. Hunt, John Everett Millais, Rossetti, and Thomas Woolnor, the sculptor was primarily artistic, not literary. But they expressed their faith by words as well as by painting. This led to the foundation of *The Germ* (1850). At the outset they had no thought of any mediaeval revival and according to their organ which had a short life of only four months, they wanted to encourage a complete adherence to the simplicity of nature. Ruskin had indoctrinated them with this idea of a return to nature. He also held up the men of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as examples of sincerity, truthfulness and fine religious quality which modern art had lost. The result was a slavish imitaion of mediaeval art, but soon Rossetti and his associates broke away from the trammels of the original programme. A healthy naturalistic impulse soon overcame their antiquarianism. Rossetti gave up the practice of sacred art, but the essential mediaevalism of the Brotherhood remained a fundamental feature of his art.

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The Blessed Damozel, the famous poem, was published first in *The Germ*. It was a kind of poetic revelation to a select few, though unknown to the world. In 1860, he married Elizabeth Siddal who died in 1862 from an overdose of laudanum and Rossetti hardly ever got over the shock and in passionate grief he buried the MSS of his poems in his wife's coffin. They were disinterred and published as *Poems* in 1870. A contemporary poet Robert Buchanan vehemently attacked him in a magazine article, later published as a pamphet entitled *The Fleshly School of Poetry*. He denounced the moral tendency of his *Poems* and condemned him also as an artist. Buchanan brought the charge of sensuality against him, the same charge which had been brought against Keats by the reviewers of his time. In 1861, Rossetti had shown his capacity as a translator by his publication *The Early Italian Poets* (afterwards entitled *Dante and His Circle*.) It may be remembered that Rossetti was by ancestry three-fourth Italian and the essential qualities of his ancestry seem to have been revived to him. There was something southern and Catholic about his genius. Like Keats, too, he was completely indifferent to his own age, its scientific achievements and growing industrialization. He was not a Catholic either. He was a decided sceptic, but like Keats, owing partly to his heritage, he had an instinctive sympathy with Catholic faith. In Rossetti, we have the best example of art unmodified by philosophy, science or religion and it is art inclined towards romance, but even he could not escape completely the influences of his time. It is clear that between him and Keats, the Oxford Movement had intervened and he translated the mediaeval religion of the Oxford Movement into poetry and imparted to romance a new mediaevalism and a new tone.

Morris

William Morris (1834-1896) was the first poet of note to be influenced by Rossetti who lured him also from architecture to painting. He was a poet, artist, manufacture and socialist all rolled in one, and his life was an epitome of what Carlyle and Ruskin were teaching. As a poet, facility was his gift as well as his danger.

Morris is genuinely and profoundly mediaeval in his Arthurian poems and in those founded upon Froissart. He was keen on reincarnating the spirit of the past. He felt that modern industrialism was divorced from art and his whole effort was to establish a vital link between art and life.

In 1858 appeared his first volume, *The Defence of Guinevere of Other Poems*, which was the first product in book-form of the Pre-Raphaelite impulse. *The life and Death of Jason* (1866) is classical in subject but mediaeval in tone. This was followed by the four valumes of *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-1870). The main body of this voluminous work consists of twenty-four tales, twelve of romantic and twelve of classical origin. The blend of classicism and romance as in Keats continues, but in spite of his sympathy with the mid-

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dle ages and debt to Chaucer, Morris failed to recapture the naivete of the childlike art which he so greatly adored. The spirit of melancholy of his own are broods over his narratives. Like Rossetti he had escaped into the middle ages from the ugliness of industrialism and capitalism, but later his romanticism turned into utopianism and he became a socialist and entered practical politics. He believed that art would shine with a brighter light if it would rest on the sympathy of the people and in this attitude, he marks a distinct departure from Rossetti's purely aesthetic impulse. The Pre-Raphaelites did not share his practical interests and though in his *Earthly Paradise*, *Jason* and *Guinevere*, Morris had shown the same Pre-Raphaelite tendency to ignore modern diseases, the 'dreamer of dreams born out of my due time' had a purpose all his own.

To Rossetti, poetry and pictures alone were supreme. The mass of men existed only to make art possible. Morris held that the best art was impossible unless life was artistic. Morris's socialism was thus a means to an end. The end was beauty as in Keats and in this view he stands closer to Keats than any other poet. This beauty he realizes in his poetry and in his artistic products.

Notwithstanding the fact that he wrote *The Life and Death of Jason*, translated the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey*, Morris is conspicuously unclassical. His Greek story of Jason is thoroughly mediaevalized. The mediaeval element of Keats's poetry can thus be traced in Morris's poetry, though he lacked Keats's power of recapturing the mystical as exemplified in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. He lacked also Chaucer's robust realism, but his sympathy with the directness and simplicity of the age is genuine.

When the *Poems* (1870) of Rossetti appeared, William Morris's *Defence of Guinevere* was twelve years and Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* four years old. Yet both acknowledged him as the master spirit and their poems were deeply influenced by him. To Swinburne, Rossetti's influence was an inspiration, but Morris found himself when he made Chaucer his master. He was not quite successful as a Pre-Raphaelite.

Swinburne

Swinburne was introduced to Rossetti and Morris at Oxford in 1857, and he became an avowed disciple of Rossetti. He was even ready to recognize the genius of other people, but at the same time he was a rebel by nature and soon he began to work a revolution in pre-Raphaelite poetry. His distinction was threefold. He wedded classicism to romance, he re-established the influence of French literature and he showed the capacity of the English language for several lyric measures invented or borrowed from foreign languages. It is in the union of classicism and romance that Swinburne is allied to Keats. His drama, *Atlanta in Calydon* (1865), greatest in classical form since *Samson Agonistes*, is nevertheless a poem steeped in romantic influence. The choruses, however, which proclaim his

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great lyrical power, show that he is of the school of Shelley rather than of Keats and in this respect he differs from other Pre-Raphaelites. Swinburne was not touched either by Catholic sentiment, though many of the subjects in his *Poems and Ballads* (1866) are mediaeval. It is obvious that he could not write about saints, martyrs and madonnas. His sympathy was rather with the singer, Francois Villon (b. 1431), who had sung the experience of his own riotous life. Swinburne's genius was essentially lyrical, not dramatic, though he had written several dramas. Shelleyan qualities like energy, rapidity and fire mark his metre and style. He was also a successor to Shelley in his passion for liberty. Unlike Keats, he was greatly moved by the stirring events of his time. *A Song in Time of Order* and *A Song in time of Revolution* show his kindredship with Shelley, but his luscious word-painting is reminscent of Keats who declared in a formula that 'Poetry must surprise by a fine excess.'

12. KEATS'S LOVE OF BEAUTY
Or
KEATS AS AN AESTHETE
Or
KEATS AS A POET OF BEAUTY
Or
"BEAUTY IS TRUTH, TRUTH BEAUTY"

Beauty as Religion

Keats not only loved beauty but he worshipped it as a devotee. Love of Beauty is the dominant note of his poety from the early *Endymion* to his last poem *Hyperion*. "If I should die," Keats wrote, "I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory ; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had time, I would have made myself remembered."

Keats is remembered as a poet of beauty. For him a thing of beauty is a joy for ever. "With a great poet," says Keats, "the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration." In a letter to Woodhouse, Keats wrote : "I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever shine upon them."

Beauty was for Keats the moving spirit of his life and art. Beauty was his religion. To him Beauty was "an exaltation of the senses made creative by that exaltation."

His Conception of Beauty

There are different and opposite interpretations regarding Keats's beauty. For Mr. Ford Keats's chief poems celebrate sexual love and sensuous beauty. On the orther hand, Wasserman, Murry and Bradley have found the presence of ideal beauty in Keats's poems. The

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fact is that Keats's conception of beauty changed : in his earliest poetic phase he loved the sensuous beauty ; in his maturer poetic phase he loved the ideal beauty.

In the beginning, his love of Beauty was entirely sensuous. He was possessed with an extraordinary 'organic sensibility', and so could perceive objects of sense more intensely than ordinary people. Even common, everyday objects which leave others unmoved and unaffected thrilled him and filled him with aesthetic literature, beauty of mythology and folklore, in short loveliness of everything from earth to heaven threw him into wild raptures. His friend Haydon bears testimony to his love of beauty when he states : "The humming of a bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the Sun, seemed to make his nature tremble ; then his eyes flashed, his cheeks glowed, and his mouth quivered." The song of a nightinagale could transport him to fairylands, or to thick forests where embalmed with darkness he would enjoy the sweet fragrance of many a flower. Even the season of autumn, considered disagreeable by others, has its own charms and pleasures for him. To him it is a season of golden mists and mellow fruitfulness, a season which was its own sweet music. Equally keen and intense is his delight in female charms—

"Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair
Soft dimpled hands, white neck and creamy breast."

So Keats is a poet of light feet and dark violet eyes, etc. He loves sensuous beauty of all kind.

His passage from the sensuous to the spiritual beauty is very smooth and evolutionary. He had a yearning for Beauty that was Truth, and he wrote : "I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness for the beautiful, even if my nights' labours should be burnt every morning." Gradually, his aestheticism came to have an intellectual cantour. He declared that a thing of beauty was a joy for ever, and that Beauty is Truth and Truth Beauty. He craved for eternal beauty instead of temporal, sensuous beauty. Physical beauty fades with time and finally dies out completely. It is only spiritual beauty, or the beauty of ideas that lives eternally. He bids farewell to sensuous beauty and sensuous joys :

"And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts."

Keats realizes that Beauty is a power. In *The Hyperion : A Vision*, he comments :

"For its the eternal law
That first in Beauty should be first in might."

So he identified Beauty first with Truth and then with Power. Rightly says Mattew Arnold, "The truth is that 'the yearning passion for the Beautiful' which was with Keats, as he himself truly says, the master-passion, is not a passion of sensuous and sentimental poet. It is an intellectual and spiritual passion."

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Conclusion

Hence, among all poets of the Romantic Revival, Keats was the only truly aesthete, because he believed that the truth of imagination was the ultimate truth, almost divine and eternal, and truth and beauty were synonymous. "What imagination seizes as beauty must be truth," wrote Keats in one of his letters, "whether it existed before or not." To him the life of reason and logic was painful and ugly.

A. R. Weekes has summed up the whole matter in the following lines : "First it may be said that the differentia of Keats, his root quality, is the disinterested love of beauty. He, more than any of his fellows, grasps the essential oneness of beauty and truth ; his cry is 'Seek ye First' the ideal beauty 'and all other things shall be added unto you'. Because he had no time to sing out all that was in him, he has been rather more misunderstood than most other men of genius, and his creed has been taken to mean beauty of form alone. But Keats, like Shakespeare, thought much about questions of conduct. His ideals was the Greek ideal of beauty inward and outward, the perfect soul of verse as well as the perfect form. And, precisely because he held this ideal; he was free from the wish to preach which beset Wordsworth and Shelley."

13. KEATS AS AN ESCAPIST
Or
KEATS'S ESCAPISM

Definition of Escapism

Escapism means aloofness from the hard realities of life. It means an attempt to escape into a world of imagination or imaginary ideal world. Critics have called Keats an escapist. He escapes from the hard realities of life into the beauty of the old Greece, and into the romance of the Middle Ages. He keeps himself aloof and detached from the suffering humanity. Therefore, the critics opine that Keats is a pure artist and does not reflect in his poetry the picture of the society in which he moved, or the French Revolution that had rocked Europe. He lives in an ivory tower. In this respect, he is like other romantic poets who escaped from the real world to a remote or fanciful area. Wordsworth escaped to the world of nature; Coleridge sought refuge in the supernatural ; Shelley soared higher and higher in the aerial world of his Utopian ideas.

Why is Keats regarded as an Escapist ?

Keats is regarded as an escapist because—(1) He wished for a life of sensation and not of thought ; (2) he was given to the pleasures of the senses ; (3) his poery does not reflect contemporary social and intellectual scene ; (4) he was distrustful of thought and philosophy ; and (5) in one of his letters he states that he did not live in this world, but in a thousand of other worlds.

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In this connection, S. A. Brooke in his *Studies in Poetry* says : "All the poets of Keats's own time were influenced by the political and social aims which were forced into activity by the French Revolution. The ideas that awoke the youthful passion of Wordsworth and of Coleridge, that stirred the wrath of Scott, that worked like yeast in Byron and brought forth new matter, that Shelley reclothed and made into the prophecy of the future, were ignored and unrepresented by Keats. Their poetry spoke of man and destiny, and his wrongs and his rights, his duties and his hopes. But, in Keats, the ideas of the Revolution have disappeared. He has, in spite of a few passages and till quite the end of his career, no vital interest in the present, none in man as a whole, none in the political movement of human thought, none in the future of mankind, none in liberty, equality or fraternity, no interest in anything but Beauty. And of all the religious and theological questions, of the lives of the poor, of education and class divisions, of the nature of the soul, and whence it derives its relations to the natural world, of duty to our follow-men—questions which one and all were vital to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley, and afterwards to Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, which, though not discussed as doctrines, yet water like a river all the landscape of their work—there is, spite of a few vague aspirations, not one solitary trace in Keats. It is not that they are consciously laid aside, it is, as if they had never existed in the world."

Similarly, Courthope also observes, "The poetry of Keats exhibits the progressive efforts of a man of powerful genius to create for his imagination an ideal atmosphere, unaffected by social influences of his age."

Not an Escapist

Keats is not an escapist. If his wings flew to the land of romance, or the wonderful old Greece, it is because his imagination caught fire only in these two realms. If he did not reflect the manners of his society it only means that he was not like Pope or Tennyson, a representative poet of an age, but like Shakespeare a poet for all ages. Like Shakespeare he wanted to keep poetry away from party and politics, from extremely earthy things. He was a believer in 'negative capability' which impelled him to keep poetry away from this worldliness and ego.

In fact, much of the escapist tendency of Keats's poetry is due to his theory of the nature and function of poetry. Keats believed that the function of poetry was not the propagation of intellectual or philosophical principles, nor preaching of morals.

A Poet of Beauty

There, therefore, arises no question of escaping. He was a poet of beauty and sang joyously that a thing of beauty was a joy for ever. His genius lay in the domain of the senses, the world of romance and beauty, and the realm of the Flora and Fauna. Unlike Wordsworth he did not moralize his songs, and unlike Shelley he did not intellec-

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tualize Nature. He loved Nature for her own sake. He was a conscientious artist and luxuriated in the sensuous and imaginative felicity of a rounded phrase.

His Awareness of Human Suffering

It would be wrong to say that Keats was unaware of human suffering. In fact, his poetry reveals the fever and the fret of life, its sorrows and anxieties, its palsy-shake and its grey-haired gloom. Unlike Shelley, who was of the air airy, Keats was of the earth earthy.

He saw misery and suffering all around him and faced it acutely and frequently. He came to the conclusion that joy exists only with sorrow. He bids farewell to 'Joy' and says :

> "Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life where I must
> Find the agonies, the strife of human hearts."

In *Hyperion : A vision*, he emphatically declares that great, immortal poetry can arise out of human suffering alone :

> "None can usurp this height (of poetry), returned the Shade,
> But those to whom the miseries of the world,
> Are misery, and will not let them rest."

This is certainly not the position of an escapist. Keats is conscious that really great poetry arises from the experiences of hard reality, and wants to formulate a philosophy of suffering. As a matter of fact, Keats may be called an escapist only in his early and immature work. He soon grew out of this early stage. As Prof. Garrod points out, from pure poetry, "philosophy, politics, action, character, called him," and made him a poet of social suffering.

His following lines would repudiate the charge of escapist :

> "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—that is all
> You know on earth, and all you need to know."

Middleton Murry says that these lines "contain deep wisdom purchased at the full price of deep suffering." In fact, Keats did not want to escape from life, but rather his regret was that he had not yet formulated a philosophy of his own. Letters after letters show that he yearned for a poetry in which thought, knowledge, and the senses, would work together and enable him to achieve a philosophy of suffering of his own, different from that of the other poets.

Representation on the Age

To say that Keats never represented the age he lived in, is wrong. There are some traces of his period in *Hyperion : A Vision* which is an epic of daring revolution. It is the epic of the rebellion of the younger generation of gods against the tyranny of the older dynasty represented by *Hyperion*. It is in *Hyperion* that mature Keats finds his first full expression, cruel destiny cut short a brilliant and promising career in its prime and did not permit it to reach its fruition.

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Conclusion

To conclude, Keats was an escapist only in his early poetry. His later poetry, especially his letters, show an increasing awareness of life and its problems. The controversy regarding his aloofness from life has arisen only because he was a pure poet, a devoted worshipper of Beauty. He was of the opinion that poetry should have no 'palpable designs on us", even if it has a message, it should be imparted indirectly and unobstrusively. Hence, he is often misunderstood and regarded as a friviolous poet having no high seriousness, and fit only for the young and the immature.

14. KEATS AS A POET OF NATURE

Keats's Attitude towards Nature

Keats loved Nature just for its own sake and for the glory, beauty and loveliness it had. As a critic says, "Keats seeks to know Nature perfectly and to enjoy her fully, with no ulterior thought than to give her complete expression. With him no considetation of theology, humanity, or metaphysics mingle with nature." He is in this respect differect from other poets.

Wordsworth, Coleride, Byron, Shelley and Keats were all poets of Nature, but in far different ways. Wordsworth and Shelley go behind the external phenomena of nature and philosophize over them. Wordsworth sees behind nature the spirit of God, Shelley sees behind it the spirit of Love and Liberty. They both spiritualize and intellectualize nature. They are concerned far less with depicting nature as it is than with marvelling at the prophets of nature. On the other hand, Keats and Byron are primarily concerned with a frank expression of the sensuous joy derived from a close observation of nature's externals. They do not spiritualize or philosophize over nature. They are content with the beauties of its outward manifestations.

Sensuous Apprehension of Nature

"Where Wordsworth spiritualizes, and Shelley intellectualizes Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses : the colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsating music—these are the things that stir him to the depths. There is not a mood of Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him."—(*Compton-Rickett*). The pictorial power of nature is found in his *Ode to Autumn* :

> "With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run ;
> To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees."

Then he luxuriates in colour. There are the golden apples, the emerald moss, the green foliage and the grey thatches. Sensuous beauty is the dominant feature in his observation of Nature. He looked at the objects of nature with a child-like delight like the Greeks. "He had a way," says Stopford Brooke, "of fluttering in butterfly fashion, from one object to an other, touching for the moment the momentary charm of each thing."

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Minuteness of Detail

Keats's friend, Severn, has rightly said, "Nothing seemed to escape him, the song of a bird and the undertone of response from covert or hedge, the rustle of some animal, the changing of the green brown lights and furtive shadows, the motions of the wind... ...and the wayfaring of the clouds ; even the features and gestures of passing tramps, the colour of one woman's hair, the smile on child's face, etc. His early poems are full of vivid pictures of the moods and objects of nature which bear witness to his sensuous alertness to the colour, beauty, form, smell and sounds lying around him.

Keats's observation of Nature, therefore, is very minute.

Love for the Calm Repose in Nature

While Shelley loved the dynamic, changing aspects of nature—nature in the flux, the ceaseless activity that goes on within her—Keats enjoys her seeming repose and calm. It is the peace and quiet in her that appeals to him most. He loves the sleeping woods :

"As when upon a tranced summer-night,
These green-rob'd senators of might—woods,
Tall oaks, branch—charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir."

Unheard melodies were to him sweeter than the heard ones. He loved the beauty of Nature, but what he loved most was "the seeming sleep of Nature", her silent phases, "the repose of places", in which he discovers an ecstasy that is at once the glory and the greatness of his poetry.

Personification of Nature

Keats personifies the powers of Nature. He looks at nature, like the Greeks, with wonder and childlike delight. He feels disillusioned with the spirit of enquiry and doubt which has smothered simplicity and wonder, and long for the old good days of happy piety :

"O brightest ! thou too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water and the fire."

For Keats every object of Nature is haunted by an attendant deity, god or goddess. The tree is haunted by the Dryad and the sea is haunted by the Naiads. He never saw an oak tree without beholding the Dryad. In the *Ode to a Nightingle*, he writes :

"That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees."

The forests are haunted by Pans add Satyres. Whoever wonders may happen to see in the forest Pan playing on the flute. In the *Ode to Autumn* the poet treats Autumn as a goddess or a mythological woman in the spirit of Greek worship of the object of Nature :

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"Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
The hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers."

She is a Gleaner :

"And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook."

Like the Greeks, Keats looks at Nature with wonder and awe, and simple delight. His habit of personification further enables him to picture Nature more accurately and concretely.

Occasional Mysticism

There are certain inspired moments—though very rare—when he rises above the sensuous enjoyment of the present, and has glimpses of eternity, like a mystic. For example, in the *Ode to a Nightingle*, he has glimpses of the bird's immortality. In the words of Middleton Murry, "with a magnificent sweep of imagination, he sees the song and the bird as one. The bird becomes pure song, and inherits the eternity of beauty."

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down."

In such inspired moments, Keats is not satisfied with the beauty of the present, but has visions of eternal beauty.

In this connection, Margaret Sherwood has commented in this manner : "He was immediately aware of the close interknitting of man, body, mind and soul, with the green world of which he was a part. Reading, when he writes of spring, of autumn, one seems to be, not observing, but experiencing the quickening of spring, the ripening of autumn. The idea of oneness in all life, of organic relationship between all manifestations of life, toward which the natural philosophy of the time was groping, was with Keats a sensation, as well as an instinct, an intuition. He was one in whom there was immediate consciousness of the 'one life within us and abroad', a physical as well as an emotional and spiritual awareness."

Neverthelss, Keats loves the simpler and the homelier aspects of Nature, and, like Shelley, the vaster and the wilder. He does not sing of the cloud, the lightning and the thunder, or of the west wind, but of—

".....the sweet buds which with a modest pride,
Full droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scantily leaved and finely tapering stems,
Here are sweet-peas, on tip-toe for a flight,
With wings of gentle flush ov'r delicate white
And taper fingers catching at all things
To bind them all with tiny rings."

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15. KEATS AS A WRITER OF ODES

Keats wrote sonnets, ballads, narrative poems and odes. It is in the odes that his best poetic qualities are found. His odes are the gems of literature, the jewels of poetry. They are the peacock-throne sitting on which Keats has become an immortal poet and has achieved a place on the Parnassus. In the words of Sidney Colvin, "Odes of Keats constitute a class apart in English Literature". Prof. Selincourt admires the Odes for their indefinable beauty and emotional intensity and writes, "Nowhere in our literature, save in some of Shakespeare's sonnets, do these emotions affect us with the same hunting pathos, for nowhere else do they find such intensely imaginative expression." Praising the Odes, Robert Bridges says, "Had Keats left us only his Odes, his rank among the poets would not be lower than it is, for they have stood apart in literature, at least the six most famous of them."

"In the Odes," says Downer, "he is at his best, and they will live as long as English poetry is read." Swinburne pays a more glorious tribute to Keats's odes when he writes : "Greater lyrical poetry the world may have seen than any that is in these odes ; lovelier it surely has never seen nor ever can it possibly see."

Admiring the art and music of the odes, Legouis and Cazamian observe : "The most original character of his art is its density ; each epithet is extraordinarily rich in suggestion ; the long lingering of each word in a thought which lovingly enfolds it, has loaded in with a whole spiritual crystalization. Each of the images, which by an exquisite act have been selected from among the most evocative, opens up to our view far-reaching perspective." In these poems of his maturity the language of Keats scintillates with all the gems of speech, without their brilliance predominating over the conciseness and nervous exactness of the whole. Thus, the six great Odes of Keats—The Ode to *Psyche*, to *Melancholy*, to *A Nightingale*, to *A Grecian Urn*, to *Indolence*, and to *Autumn*, have received the highest praises from all the critics of Keats. These great Odes are a unique phenomenon in English literature. Nothing like them existed before. Nothing like them will ever exist in the future.

Modification in the Ode by Keats

The ode is in the form of an address, often to some abstraction. It has a lyric enthusiasm and emotional intensity. It is a spontaneous overflow of the poet's emotions. Its theme is dignified and exalted. It has a seriousness of purpose. It is often sung, hence is musical. The development of thought is logical and clear. Its metrical pattern may be regular or irregular, but it is always elaborate and often complex and intricate. Its style is also elevated. Keats's great Odes have all the significant characteristics of the ode.

In writing the ode, Keats modified both the content and structure of this traditional verse form. Originally, the verse form was Greek, also to be found in Latin poetry, and was used to write an invocation

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to the pagan gods and goddesses. During the Middle Ages, this form was not favoured. It was revived in the eighteenth century English poetry, largely because of the influence of the Latin poets. The eighteenth century English poets, notably Dryden and Pope, used the verse form for invocating good sense. They retained the conventional impersonality of the form, and filled with arguments counter-arguments, preachings, perorations, and so on. The Ode remains wooden in their hands. It was Wordsworth who made the Ode more personal and lyrical in character than any other poet before him. The verse form of Ode is to Keats what the dramatic form of poetry was to Shakespeare. Like the plays of Shakespeare, the odes of Keats range from the playful, almost comic, *Ode to Maia* or *Ode on Indolence* to the tragic *Ode to a Nightingale* and thence to the beatific *Ode to Autumn.*

Background of Their Writing

Keats's all great Odes were written sometime during the spring of 1819 when Keats suffered the worst blows of misfortune. Of his two brothers, Tom died of consumption, George migrated to America. The signs of flirtations on the part of Fanny Brawne, to whom Keats had been secretly betrothed, were mortal blows to his frail constitution. Lastly, he developed the first symptoms of a fatal disease. And, then add to these, the mortally wounding criticism of *Endymion* and the realization of his failure in the first version of *Hyperion.* It was a time of mounting suffering, disillusionment and frustration both in his personal life as well as literary career. The action of his odes lies in the poet's desperate efforts to cling to the joy of the ideal and the imaginary, and his becoming aware of the painful reality.

The Worship of Beauty

The great Odes of Keats evince his worship and enjoyment of Beauty—beauty of art, of nature, and of the ancient world of the Hellas. It was Beauty, and Beauty alone which inspired him and made him create verse. In the *Ode to Nightingale*, the poet enjoys the immortal Beauty of the nightingale's song, in the *Ode to Autumn* the mellow fruitfulness of nature in that season of golden mists, and in the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, his imagination is fired by the perfect Beauty of a piece of Greek sculpture. In the *Ode to Psyche*, the Beauty and romance of the beautiful goddess, more beautiful than Venus herself, fires him and he builds a temple for her worship.

Melancholy Tone

All romantic poetry of the 19th century is wrapt in melancholy. Keats was no exception. The miseries of his life, his brother's death, another brother's migration, his beloved's flirtations, his poetry's severe criticism had made him sad and miserable. So he began to sing out his deep-rooted melancholy through his great Odes and spoke of—

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"The weariness the fever and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies."

Thus, he spoke in the *Nightingale*. In the *Grecian Urn* he wrote :

"A burning forehead and parching tongue."

And

"When old age shall this generation waste."

Disillusionment and Escape

The odes, therefore, express his disillusionment with this world and his strong desire to escape to a world of Beauty, of Nature, of some other world. In the *Grecian Urn* he escapes imaginatively to the world of art but cannot forget reality for long. However, he concludes, we must accept reality as it is and accept beauty with ugliness, joy with sorrow, the ideal with the real.

Manifestation of Negative Capability

Keats's Odes "are in fact supreme examples of Negative Capability, when a man is capable of bearing uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Negative Capability, commonly speaking, is a capacity for objectivity in midst of harrowing personal miseries and sufferings. In other words, Negative Capability is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason, and the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration. The theme of Keats's great Odes, says Douglas Bush, "is the belief that whereas the momentary experience of beauty is fleeting, the ideal embodiment of that moment in art song, or in marble, is an imperishable source of joy. If that were all, these Odes should be hymns of triumph, but they are not. It is the very acme of melancholy that the joy he celebrates is joy in beauty that must die."

Fusion of Art and Spontaneity

Keats's Odes are perfect specimen of Keats's artistry. His love of fine phrases, his habit of loading every rift of his subject with ore, his power of word-painting, his use of suggestive, sensuous epithets, his music and melody, in short, every aspect of his art finds a rich and full expression in the Odes. Their workmanship is flowless, the development of thought logical, and the language clear and well-chiselled. Praising the art of the great Odes, Swinburne writes, "...of these perhaps the two are nearest to perfection, the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost beauty possible to human words, may be the *Ode to Autumn* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the most radiant, fervent, and musical is that to *A Nightingale* ; the most pictorial is that to *Psyche* ; the subtlest in sweetness of thought and feeling is that on *Melancholy*." However, all this exquisite art of the odes, is not the result of conscious artistry ; it came

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spontaneously to the poet, for the ode-form was the most natural expression of his ginius. Thus, in the Odes, the poet has achieved the rare union of art and spontaneity.

Metrical Form

So far as the metrical form is concerned, Keats follows neither the Pindaric nor the Horacian models. His odes are of the modern regular type. "His most characteristic form consists of a group of stanzas of highly complex structure, regular, or nearly regular, in their resemblance to one another."—(*Weekes*).

Conclusion

His odes are rich in manner and matter. They are the pieces of perfect artistry. They are things of beauty, hence, a joy for ever. They bring us into intimate contact with the mind of Keats. They will be read and enjoyed as long as English language is read and poetry admired. "The Odes are like an invitation to a feast ; one who reads them will hardly be satisfied until he knows of more such delighful poetry."—(*Long*).

16. KEATS AS A SONNETEER

Keats as a sonneteer ranks next only with the great Elizabethan sonneteers. His sonnets are pieces of beauty, proclaiming Keats's gospel of Beauty. Though his reputation as a poet chiefly rests on his odes, his sonnets are not inferior to the sonnets of great sonneteers, such as, Shakespeare. He begun to write sonnets very early in his life say at the age of sixteen or eighteen. In the beginning, he wrote in imitation of Spenser and Shakespeare. His first book—*Poems* (1817)—contains one of his best sonnets, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*.

As a sonneteer, Keats, therefore, ranks with the greatest English poets. Of his sixty-one sonnets some ten, including "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," "When I have Fears that I may Cease to be," and "Bright Star, would I were steadfast as Thou Art," are worthy to be ranked with those of Shakespeare. After a short adherence to the Petrarchan form in the 1817 volume, Keats turned to the Shakespearean form, which undoubtedly suited him better. The sonnet quoted below will show how effortless and spontaneous is his best work in this medium :

"When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain ;
When I behold, upon the night's star'd face,
Huge cloudly symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance ;

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And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think,
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink."

Palgrave remarked that he found in *Chapman's Homer* the 'pure serene' ot the original, 'the reader must bring with him the imagination of the youthful poet ; he must be a Greek himself, Shelley finely said of Keats.' According to J.M. Murry, "Keats's sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, holds a position of peculiar significance in his work as a whole for several reasons, because it is one of the finest sonnets in the English language, because it is the first entirely successful poem that he wrote, because he wrote it very early in his poetic career—in the very month, October 1816, in which he became twenty-one, and decided, to his guardian's consternation, to abandon medicine for poetry, because it was to take him many months, even of his brief and crowded poetic life, to reach such assured mastery again, and finally because he wrote it very quickly. There are not many poems so well worth studying as this one....."

All that the sonnet really means, is crammed into that final image, it is the flower of the plant, the purpose and the essence of the created thing.

Keats's sonnets impress the readers by their varied character. The earlier ones are mostly Italian in verse form, in the later ones the Shakespearean form predominates, but in all of them is a felicity of expression, a manner, which is truly Shakespearean. The greater number of his early sonnets are occasional, reflective or dedicatory poems whereas in the closing period, the true sonnet predominates. They are mostly distinguished by a total absence of self-consciousness which is the real bane of sonnets. The most well-known, and deservedly too, is one of his earliest sonnets, the one beginning 'Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold'. 'When I have fears', 'The Human Seasons', 'To one who hath been long in city pent', 'Time's sea', 'To Sleep,' and 'Why did I laugh to-night' are some of his famous sonnets.

17. KEATS AS A NARRATIVE POET

Keats's genius was essentially lyrical, but he also attempted a few narrative poems. They are more distinguished by their poetic beauty than by their narrative skill. In a narrative poem, the parts must be subordinated to the whole, and it should have the unity of design and structure. The narrative poems of Keats are deficient in plot-structure. In them, the poet in Keats gets the better of the story-teller. Keats has left three complete narrative poems—*Isabella* or the *Pot of Basil* ; *The Eve of St. Agnes* ; and *Lamia*. His other narrative poems are *Hyperion, Endymion. La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and *The Eve of St. Mark*.

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(a) Endymion

Keats's *Endymion*, opening with the famous line "A thing of Beauty is a joy for ever" appeared in 1818. It is based on the classical myth of the love of the moon-goddess, Cynthia, for a shepherd-prince, Endymion. This poem is a test of Keats's powers of imagination and invention, and his narration. The poems is allegorical as it has an allegory of the quest of the human soul for Ideal Beauty. Endymion stands for the poet as man, Cynthia for ideal Beauty, the Moon for the manifestations of that beauty in Nature, and the Indian maiden for its manifestation in womanhood.

(b) Isabella

In *Endymion* the poet had made a headlong plunge into the sea, and as a result acquired knowledge of its rocks and quicksands. In other words, the writing of *Endymion* gave him much valuable poetic experience and trained his powers. In *Isabella* which he had planned and begun in 1818, he shook off many of the faults and weaknesses of the earlier work, and alone, for the first time, with full power and fight.

The story of Isabella is a tragic story of love based on Boccaccio's *Decameron* in which the Italian poets tell of the love of a maiden of Messina for a youth in the service of her three merchant-brothers. The brothers do not like that their sister should make such a low match. The youth is murdered ; his head is buried in a pot of Basil and the maiden waters the pot with her tears. The end is thus tragic and pathetic. Keats has followed the original pretty closely, but he has amplified it much in detail. He has also changed the scene from Messina to Florence, and the number of Isabella's brothers from three to two. Moreover, in order to give a more satisfying reason for the murder of her lover, he has introduced a rich noble to whom the brothers want to marry their sister. The treatment is the poet's own throughout.

The beginning of the story is long. The poet himself expresses sympathy for Isabella, who is sad at the loss of the pot of Basil—

"O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !
O Echo, Echo, on some other day,
From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !
Spirits of grief, sing not your 'Well-a-way !'
For Isabel, sweet Isabel will die ;
Will die a death too lone and incomplete,
Now they have taken away her Basil sweet."

Isabel's death is pathetic. The work is not to be placed in the first rank of the poet's works, but it is tender, touching and picturesque. As regards its faults, the poem is unequal in workmanship. Too much time is taken in beginning the story, and the description of the brothers occupies too much space. The language is sometimes slip-

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shod, and in some places the difficulty of finding a rhyme results in pathos.

As regards the merits of *Isabella*, "The exuberance of his fancy is kept in check, and the luxuriance of his vocabulary is steadily repressed." The poem shows a remarkable restraint and self-control.

(c) Lamia

Lamia or *The Serpent Woman* is one of the most finished poems of Keats. Its heroine is a serpent-woman or double-natured being, who can change from a serpent into a woman and *vice versa*. The poem was written in 1819. It is based on a story told in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. A youth of Cornith, named Lucius, is beguiled by a young beautiful woman and is taken by her to her home. She promises to live and die with him. The young man marries her, and in honour of their marriage a grand feast is given. To this feast comes Apollonius, a philosopher, who recognizes the lady to be a serpent, or lamia. The lady requests the philosopher to be silent regarding her real nature, and when he refuses to do so, she vanishes along with her house and all other belongings.

The story is best constructed of all Keats's narratives, and some of the descriptions are wonderful pieces of imagination. There are few passages in literature so vivied as the picture of the serpent-woman at the beginning. "There is perhaps nothing in all his writings so vived, or that so burns itself upon the mind as the picture of the serpent-woman awaiting the touch of Hermes to transform her."—(*Sidney Colvin*).

Its versification is modelled upon Dryden's, and triplets and alexandrines have been effectively used to impart variety.

The poem is based on classical legend. The story begins in an enchanted forest in the island of Crete. A beautiful serpent, who was formerly a beautiful woman, is restored to her former shape by the god Hermes. She loves a handsome youth, Lycius. As he passes through the forest, Lamia greets him and Lycius enchanted with her beauty, takes her to her house. There at the marriage-feast, Apollonius, the old teacher of Lucius, fixes his gaze upon Lamia and denounces her as a serpent. Lamia gives out a frightful shriek and vanishes into air. Lycius cannot bear the shock, he falls down, and dies.

Admirably told, though perhaps somewhat disproportionately for its place in the poem, is the introductory episode of Hermes and his nymph ; admirably again the concluding scene where the merciless gaze of the philosopher exercises his pupil's dream of love and beauty, and the lover in forfeiting his illusion forfeits life. This thrilling vividness of narration in particular points out the fine melodious vigour of *Lamia*, almost the first, if not the first place among Keats's narrative poems.

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But surely for this it is in some parts too feverish, and in others too unequal. It contains descriptions not entirely successful, as for instance that of the palace reared by Lamia's magic which will not bear comparison with other and earlier dream-palaces of the poet's building. And it has reflective passages, as that in the first book beginning 'Let the mad poets say whate'er they please' and the first fifteen lines of the second, wherefrom the winning and truly poetic ease of his style at its best, Keats relapses into something too like Leigh Hunt's and his own early strain of affected ease and fireside triviality.

In the moral, which the tale is made to illustrate, there is moreover a weakness. Keats himself gives us fair warning against attaching too much importance to any opinion which in a momentary mood we may find him uttering. But the doctrine he sets forth in *Lamia* is one which from the reports of his conversation we know him to have held with a certain consistency :

"Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?"

(d) The Eve of St. Agnes

Written in 1819, the poet has romantic theme taken from the middle ages. It narrates the simple story of two young lovers who escape from a hostile atmosphere to seek the happiness far away. The story is similar to that of *Romeo and Juliet*. In dealing with the theme, the poet has recreated and recaptured the atmosphere of the middle ages. It is the lovestory of Porphyro and Madeline.

Though it assumes the form of a narrative, it is hardly a narrative. Rather it is a monody of dreamy richness, a picturesque presentment of mood and sentiment. The skilful handling of the Spenserian stanza heightens its sleeply atmosphere and imparts to it a rare melody. None has ever risen from it disatisfied ; its peculiar power lies, "in the delicate transfusion of sight and emotion into sound ; in making pictures out of words, or turning words into pictures ; of giving a visionary beauty to the closer items of description ; of holding all the materials of the poem in a long-drawn-out suspense of music and reverie."—(*Rossetti*).

However, even this matchless poem, so full of life and movement, so rich in colour and sensuous word-pictures, has its own blemishes. Incorporation of the Beadsman and the Chapel its superfluous. Similarly, the banquet which is spread in Madeline's chamber has no purpose and no justification, though it may tempt the palate of the readers by its richness and flavour.

The Eve of St. Agnes is Keats's masterpiece. Middleton Murry remarks, "For harmony of emotional effect, for subtlety of narration, for sensuous opulence, no English narrative has ever surpassed *The Eve of St. Agenes*. It has the rapture and enchantment, the rich, deep and right sensuousness of complete surrender to the God. It is the brief day—spring of Keats's passion translated into terms of the

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poetic imagination. "It needs no words to praise ardour of love, its purity and tenderness, and it is set in beauty"—(*Stopford Brooke*). The pictorial element of the poem is striking. Pictures follow pictures. Herford writes : "Everything here, from the tender glories of the painted window to the delicate gates of the banquet is imagined with a consummate instinct for beauty which explores and exhausts all the sources of sensuous appeal, yet so transfigures them that nothing merely sensuous is left."

(e) The Eve of St. Mark

The Eve of St. Mark is a mere fragment. It is important not only in point of its intrinsic excellence but because it captured the imagination of poets like Rossetti and others, and thus, helped in bringing the Pre-Rephaelite Movement into being. The belief about St. Mark's Eve was that a person stationed near a church-porch at twilight on that anniversary would see entering the church the appritions of those about to die or be brought near death in the ensuing year. Keats's fragment breaks off before the story is well-engaged, and it is not easy to see how his opening would have led up to incidents illustrating this belief. Neither is it clear whether he intended to place them in medieval or in relatively modern times. The interest of the St. Mark's fragment lies not in moving narrative or the promise of it, but in two things : first, its pictorial brilliance and charm of workmanship, ond second, its relation to and influence on later English poetry. Keats in this piece anticipates in a remarkable degree the feeling and method of the Pre-Raphaelite School.

Regarding this poem, Robert Bridges writes : "The problem how to match Chaucer's narrative in modern English is much more nearly solved in the unfinished tale, *The Eve of St. Mark*, written in eight-syllable couplets with the same sort of latitude which Coleridge advocated in *Christabel*. The fragment is too short to be a complete experiment." It seems to show that he had hit on a narrative from which he might have successfully perfected.

(f) La Belle Dame sans Merci

Another medieval poem of great interest is *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (1819). The title is taken from that of a poem by A. Chartier, a French poet. This incomparable ballad can hardly be said to tell a story. It rather sets before us, says Sidney Colvin, "with imagery drawn from the medieval world of enchantment and knight-errantry, a type of the wasting power of love, when either adverse fate or deluded choice makes of love not a blessing but a bane." The poem does not so much seek to tell a story as to create an impression or express a mood. The ballad is also autobiographical ; it partly expresses the plight of the poet himself in the thraldom of Fanny Brawne. It breathes the same medieval atmosphere of magic and mystery as the *Eve of St. Agnes*, but while the *Agnes* deals with triumphant love, it deals with disillusionment in love and the suffering caused by it.

The ballad is also remarkable for its simplicity and art. It

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shows the poet's mastery over the ballad-stanza and the ballad-manner. The use of question and answer narrative in the ballad-manner serves to heighten the medieval atmosphere. The ballad manifests Keats's romantic imagination.

(g) Hyperion

In *Hyperion*, Keats's narrative powers reach full maturity. In this epic fragment, Keats deals with the struggle between the older dynasty of the Titanic gods of the Greeks, such as, Hyperion and Saturn, and the younger race of the Olympian Gods as Apollo, Jupiter and Jove, resulting in the dethronement of the former. Its style has been modelled on that of *Paradise Lost*. Keats, like Milton, uses inversions quite frequently.

In spite of its being fragmentary, *Hyperion* is a "monument of Cyclopean architecture and gradeur in verse." It is full of noble thoughts, beautiful images, and magical phrases. "The blank verse has a sustained music and power which has been rare since Milton." The poem has a sweetness, an ease, and a freshnes of its own. The story is conducted in a masterly manner ; the interest of the readers is kept in tact ; there are no digressions in the story. It is a successful narration, clear and sustained, without any confusion or prolixity.

18. KEATS AS A ROMANTIC POET

Introduction

Keats belongs to the second generation of romantic poets. He is essentially a romantic poet despite his great love for Greek myths and literature. Speaking of the romantic contents of his poetry, Saintsbury observes : "Keats, as none of his own contemporaries did, felt, expressed and handled on the exact change wrought in English poetry by the great romantic movement. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Scott and even Southey, to some extent, were the authors of this, but being the authors, they were necessarily not the result of it. Byron was fundamentally out of sympathy with it, though by accidents of time and chance he had to enlist ; Shelley, an angel and an effectual angel of poetry, was hardly a man stilless an Englishman. But Keats felt it all, expressed what of it he had time and strength to express, and left the rest to his successors, helped, guided, furthered by his own example."

Escapism

Keats possesses those features which entitle him to be called a romantic poet. All romantic poets were essentilly escapists and Keats is no exception to it. No social or political tendencies of his age are to be seen in his poetry. He does not want to be involved in sordid realities of the present times. Hence, he flies to the Middle Ages or the Greek age. In *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the poet takes us back to the medieval world with its knighthood and chivalry, and tells us the romantic story of Porphyro and Madeline. The adventure of lover is described in the following lines :

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"Meantime, acrosss the moors,
Had come young Porphyro with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Medeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss, in sooth
such things have been."

The last two lines are highly romantic. He loved Greek mythology as well and wrote *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. In the words of Courthope, "The poetry of Keats exhibits the progressive efforts of a man of powerful genius to create for his imagination an ideal atmosphere unaffected by social influences of his age." Medievalism and Hellenism are two main features of Keats's poetry.

Addition of Strangeness to Beauty

All poets love beauty, but romantic poetry imparts strangeness to beauty. This is the special contribution of romantic poets to the sphere of beauty. Wordsworth reads the message of enternity in the simplest flower —

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thought that do often lie too deep for tears."

In these lines, the poet reveals something strange and wonderful. Keats loved beauty in the flower, in the stream and in other objects of nature, and that beauty is a part of the Universal Beauty which is one and infinite "the mighty abstract idea of Beauty." The poet listens to the song of the nightingale and he is enraptured by it. And then comes the touch of romance. Kests, while hearing the sweet song passes from the world of time to the world of eternity—

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !"

The romantic imagination of the poet reveals, in a moment, a world beyond this mortal world—the world of eterninty where the nightingale sings for ever and for ever. The remote, the distant and the unfamiliar had a special fascination of its own for Keats. He pursues unknown beauty.

Love of Nature

All the romantic poets had great love for nature. Keats also enjoyed the sensuous aspects of nature. He loved nature for her own sake and looked with wondering eyes upon the face of nature with the rapture of a lover gazing at the face of the beloved. He did not derive any moral lesson from Nature as was done by Wordsworth. He did not intellectualize her as Shelley did. Keats is content to render Nature as she is. He loved and interpreted nature "more for her own sake and less for the sake of sympathy which the human mind can read into her with its own workings and aspirations. He had grown up neither like Wordsworth under the spell of lake and moun-

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tain, nor in the glow of millennial dreams like Shelley, but London-born and Middlesex-bred, was gifted with a delighted insight into all the beauties and sympathy with all the life, of the woods and fields."

Keats is captured by the beauties of nature. He admires the very spirit of Nature whom he invokes as maker of poets :

"O maker of the modern poets, delight
Of this fair world and all the gentle livers,
Spangler of clouds and halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves and dew and mumbling streams."

His Supernaturalism

Romanticism has been defined as the "Renaissance of wonder", *i. e.*, re-awakening of interest in the supernatural. For the the romantics, there are more things in heaven and earth than people dream of. There is a world of the unseen behind and above the world of the senses. Keats is also fully alive to this supersensuous world. It is the magic and mystery, the belief in ghosts and fairies, of the middle ages, that captivate his heart. *The Eve of St. Mark* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* are based upon two different medieval superstitions, and in the *La Belle Dame sans Merci* we get the medieval belief that certain cruel fairies entangle mortals in their love, and then betray them, and ruin them. *Lamia* is based on the superstition of those dark ages regarding the serpent-women, and the harm they could cause by their beauty.

Romantic Melancholy

Another salient feature of romanticism is its melancholy note. Keats's poetry is also coloured by melancholy. He writes,

"To sorrow
I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her away behind."

In the *Ode to a Nightingale* there is a poignant note :

"Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs ;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow."

The whole of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is full of melancholy :

"O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms
Alone and palely loitering ?"

In the *Ode to Melancholy*, melancholy has a prominent place :

"Aye, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sorrow shrine."

"Through all the great odes is heard a note of solemnity, deep-

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ening now and then to poignant suffering. This spirit of sadness..... strikes the key-note of the odes."—(*Weekes*).

Romantic Suggestiveness

It may also be mentioned that romantic suggestiveness reaches the acme of its development in the poetry of Keats. He suggests much more than he describes. Each one of his countless images opens up to our view far-reaching perspectives. Each epithet is extraordinarily rich in suggestiveness. He lingers lovingly over each word and leads it with a wealth of meaning.

His Music and Melody

The poetry of Keats also, like that of the romantics in general, is an spontaneous outpouring of the heart. An object of beauty inspires him to instant creative activity. He hears the song of a nightingale, is thrilled by it, and within a few hours composes the *Ode to A Nightingale*, one of the richest odes in the language. While 'correctness' was the key-note of the pseudo-classics, music and melody are the characteristics of romantic poetry. Keats's poetry has a haunting music of its own and this captivating music comes to him by nature. The 18th century classics confined themselves to one metre, *i. e.*, the heroic couplet. Keats, along with the other romantics, uses a number of metres with great effect and mastery. He is equally an adept in the use of blank verse, the Spenserian Stanza and the ballad metre.

Fusion of Romanticism and Classicism

"Keats affects that rare union of classical discipline aided by the example and precepts of the ancients, with the more intrinsically precious matter whtch the artist finds in romanticism."—(*Legouis*). He achieves perfection of form along with the positive substance of poetry. His poetry is characterized by emotion, spontaneity, inspiration and imagination, as well as with that restraint, self-control and polish, which are the hallmarks of classicism. Music and melody, highly suggestive words and images—in short, perfect felicity of expression—come to him as spontaneously as the emotional and imaginative context of his poetry. Even the romantic themes of the marvellous and the wonderful, and of medieval superstition, are enclosed by him in forms of classical perfection. The melancholy which runs through his poetry arises from his yearning for Beauty. Beauty which was also the quest of Hellas.

Conclusion

Keats is a romantic poet because of his love of nature, of superstition of fine phrase and music, of melancholy and middle ages, and of wonder and mystery. He is intensely subjective and emotional; he loves art for the sake of art. In his poetry, however, there is a balance between the formal perfection of the classics, and the emotion and imagination of the romantics. "Keats was a true romantic, and they both (Keats and Shakespeare) made the essential act of true

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romanticism."—(*Middleton Murry, "Keats and Shakespeare"*). It fact, we find in Keats's poetry the quintessence of romanticism.

19. KEATS AS AN ARTIST
Or
KEATS'S POETIC DICTION
Or
KEATS'S POETIC CRAFTSMANSHIP

A Conscoius Artist

"A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye !
Fair as a star, when only one
In shining in the sky."

This image of Keats is a true picture of his craftsmanship. His art is really like a star in the sky of poetry. His name is writ in water. But it is the water of life on which his name is written. The secret of his immortality lies in his craftsmanship. He was a conscious artist and had a high opinion of his function as a poet. Poetry came to him as naturally as leaves to a tree, yet he carefully revised and corrected what he wrote. "He seems to have studied words more carefully than did his contemporaries, and so his poetic expression, or the harmony of word and thought, is generally more perfect than theirs."—(*Long*).

His Vocabulary

In his delight and wonder in words, he was like the great Elizabethans whose works formed his habitual reading. His diction is literary ; it also abounds in many old words which have grown obsolete or are no longer used by men of letters. Like the Elizabethans, he uses language like a master with perfect ease and freedom. He coins new words qcite freely, as and when it suits his purpose to do so. While most other poets coin only compound words, he does not hesitate to coin epithets and verbs, to make verbs of nouns and nous of verbs. Also, he does not hesitate to invert the proper order of words. He is like a lord, not bound by any rules of grammar and syntax. When he uses such words as 'intense', 'genuine', 'exquisite', 'rich', 'mounting', 'sid-long', we are at once conscious that these words have been used in an unusual, specialized manner. Particularly individualized and suggestive is the use of his much sensuous epithets as 'delicious marble', 'delicious ear', 'embalmed darkness', 'drowsy ignorance', 'dewy wine', etc.

In short, Keats is one of the shapers of the English language ; he has exercised a profound influence on its growth. He has shown more convincingly than anyone else that the language of poetry is quite different from the everyday speech and the tongue of common man. Rather, it should vary according to the age in which an action is cast, or the person who may be speaking at a particular moment.

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According to Grierson, "in the quest of a diction to his taste he is guided by the colour and atmosphere which he wishes to give to the poem as a whole, his narrative of mythological age or past history. In the sonnets, where he is expressing his own feeling, the diction will be found simpler, 'such as men do use.' Many of the words he coined, have been received into the language."

Keats greatly enriched his vocabulary by his intensive and wide reading of the great masters—Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser and Dryden, as well as his high, great contemporaries. His vocabulary was marvellous, complete and unconventional. He harmonized thought and expression. He was a great wordpainter. He had rich imagination, and the melody of his verse is superb.

His Love of Fine Phrases

Keats's diction is highly individualized, suggestive and rich. He is a lover of fine phrases. "In rounded perfection and felicity of phrase," says Matthew Arnold, "he is like Shakespeare." Swinburne agees with him. Critic after critic have vexed eloquent in the praises of his phraseology. Just read some of the finest phrases of Keats in the following lines :

(1) Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks.

(2) Thy hair soft lifted by the winnowing wind.

(3) With beaded bubbles winking at the brim.

(4) There is a budding marrow in midnight.

(5) These green-robed senators of mighty woods.

(6) Thou still unravished bride of quietness.

(7) Awake for ever in sweet unrest.

Some of his adjectives are pregnant with extraordinary beauty and thought, *e. g.* : 'sun-burnt mirth', 'deep-delved earth', 'purple-stained mouth', 'beaded bubbles', etc. His diction is deliberately 'literary'.

Pictorial Quality

Keats is a marvellous word-painter. In a few possible words, he can paint vivid pictures of a vast size. If one looks at the word-paintings of the *Ode to Autumn* or any of the great odes of Keats, one will be enchanted by Keats's magic of word-paintings. His pictures are highly suggestive. The use of 'blushful', 'winking', 'purple stained mouth' conjures up the image of a blushing girl, with lipstick on her lips, dancing and beaconing to her lover. Similarly, "The vines that round the thath-caves run" offers a distinct picture. Sometimes a single epithetic suggests a whole picture, *e. g.*, "full-throated ease" gives us the picture of singing with complete absence of strain which must accompany great art. Here is another word-picture :

"Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,"

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The vividness of the picture of an old man, palsy-striken and trembling, can hardly be surpassed.

The Eve of St. Agnes and several other poems are marvellous picture-galleries. "Sensuous pictures rise distinct and round, like the reliefs upon a shield. There is something firm and finished about them, as if they were welded on a metal plate."—(*Brandes*). His pictures are characterized by minuteness of detail, sensuousness and concreteness. He differs from his master Spenser who invested his pictures with a moral significance. Keats's pictures appeal only to the senses. He also differs from his pupil Tennyson. The pictures of Tennyson are chill, conscious of themselves, almost colourless. The pictures of Keats are all aglow with colour, sensuousness and warmth. Rightly says Dawson, "The pictures of Keats are all a glow with colour, not always very accurate painter's colour, but colour which captivates or overwhelms the senses." As a word-painter, Keats has been likened to Shakespeare.

His Imagery

Keats's images—similes and metaphors—are drawn from a variety of sources. He robs the sweets of old writers. Many of his images echo poets like Spenser, Shakespeare, Drayton, Dryden, and others. His images have an associative charm. The best of them are drawn from Nature and common things which are for the first time represented as beautiful. His orginality seems inexhaustible. The wealth of images makes his poems a mine of pleasure. His images have a synaesthetic quality to bring into focus several diverse sense-impressions of an object and transmute them into a single images. He uses sense-images in abundance. *To Psyche* presents a remarkable instance of 'synaesthetic imagery' : "Midhush'd cool-rooted flowers, fragrant eyed, Blue silver-white and budded Tyrian."

His Music

Keats creates music and melody by a concentration of vowel sounds, and by the use of alliteration. In one of his letters he wrote : Vowels should be so managed as not to clash with one another, so as to bear the melody—and yet they should be inter-chanched, like differing notes of music, to prevent monotony.". Here is an example of his concentration of vowel sounds :

> "Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
> Of on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
> Or on the wealth of globed peonies."

As regards the alliteration, there are numerous uses of the same in Keats's poetry *e. g.*, "flowers, fragrant-eyed", "marbe men and maidens", "the winnowing wind", "fast-fading violets."

The musical quality of his poetry attained perfection in his six great odes. Weekes in this connection writes : "Another quality in which his work excels is that of sheer music. This, the birthright of great poets was given to Keats in full measure, even in early days, for

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example, the Hymn to Apollo.....When we came to the great odes, we find musical effects, such as, are unsurpassed in English verse."

His Style

Keats's slyle is remarkable for its simplicity and spontaneity. Words came to him as though by an inner law and when we read them we feel that they could not have been otherwise. Keats combined lucidity and sanity with simplicity. His phrases, ever vibrant with meaning, have a freshness which goes straight from his imagination to ours.

20. A GENERAL ESTIMATE OF KEATS AS A POET

Keats's opportunities were slight and his allotted span of life short. But by the force of his poetic genius, in four brief years, he had got over all obstacles and won the world's acknowledgment of his right to a place among the great poets not only of his own county but of any other country. In the words of his own friend, Leight Hunt, "Keats was born a poet of the most poetical mind. All his feelings came to him through a poetical medium, or were speedily coloured by it." Keats's poetic achievement with all its extraordinary great excellence is a miracle of four brief years. That is why in the opinion of some critics, he is "the greatest among the younger Romantic poets, and his poetic work has traces of the greatness of Shakespeare and Milton."

His Theory of Poetry : Detachment

To appreciate Keats's poetry aright, it is necessary to understand his idea of poetry and its functions. His views regarding poetry were diametrically opposed to those of Wordsworth. According to Wordsworth, instruction is the end of poetry and every great poet must be a teacher. Keats lodged an emphatic protest against this didacticism in poetry. "We hate poetry that has a palpable design on us," he declared. Poetry, according to him, should not serve as a medium for preaching philosophical, religious, social and poltical ideas. It should not be an instrument for propaganda. Poetry, as a thing of beauty, should be an end in itself. A poet, according to him, takes delight in poetic creation and should write poetry for its own sake. He always believed that poetry should "come naturally as leaves to a tree." It should be *spontaneous*, great and unobstrusively enter one's soul, as he himself says, "Poetry should surprise us by a fine access." Its only aim should be to please and thereby "soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man." In sort, he believed in what we call "a wholesome detachment". Keats's protest against Wordsworth's didacticism is equally applicable to Shelley. Dissatisfied with Shelley's zeal for reform, Keats wrote to him : "You will, I am sure, forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist and load every rift of your subject with ore." Thus, he is an artist in the truest sense of the word,

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As a Poet of Beauty : His Cult of Beauty

Keats is primarily the poet of Beauty. His conception of beauty evolves with the growth of his poetic genius. For him, poetry was simply the incarnation of beauty, and the pursuit of beauty in the abstract was his life's mission. In his earlier poems, he regards beauty as merely a physical fact, and cares only for physical beauty—

"Light feet, dark, violent eyes and parted hair,
Soft dimpled hands, white neck and creamy breast."

By and by his conception of beauty, when in the very first line of *Endymion* he strikes the key-note of all his works—

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

This line emphasizes the spiritual and intellectual side of beauty. Again, in his greatest ode, *On a Greacian Urn*, his conception of beauty widens. In it, he sums up his ideal of beauty or his philosophy of beauty thus—

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty—That is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

This spiritual conception of beauty is *repeated in the following* lines of his last and most majestic poem *Hyperion* :

"....'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might."

In the final stage, Keats sees all things of the world in their beauty and he declares that "whatever the imagination seizes, is beauty."

But the whole of Keats's poetic creed *lies in his identification* of truth with beauty—'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'. This principle of beauty haunts Keats like a passion, and pervades all his work, but specially in the volume of 1820. He was not religious like Wordsworth, nor philosophical like Coleridge, nor desirous of serving humanity like Shelley, not even a lover freedom like Byron. He was only an ardent worshipper of beauty for beauty's sake. He would confine himself simply to a vivid and accurate description of beauty as he saw it in nature, in art, in myth, and in personal feeling. He paints it with an almost faultless perfection of form of fulness of expression which leaves no carving unsatisfied. He writes of his contribution, "If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me nothing to make my friends proud of my memory ; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things."

His Sensuousness

Closely connected with his cult of beauty is the most obvious and one of the most remarkable characteristics of Keat's poetry—its abundant sensuousness, the universality of his sensuousness. Keats's whole imaginative and emotional life was permeated by his eager and acute sense perceptions and sensuous enjoyment of beauty, because he began his life with a love of sensation. Keats's craving for sensuous beauty is a mere passion, but it is not a passion of the senses or

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sentimental man, is not a passion of the sensuous or sentimental poet. It is an intellectual passion." According to Keats himself, it is "connected and made one with the ambition of the intellect." In his own words, again, it is "the mighty *abstract idea* of Beauty in all things."

Keats is sensuous in the sense that he delights and luxuriates in all those things which please the senses. He is mainly interested in sensations. By sensation he means intuition, and he places it before reasoning, *when he says*, "O for a life of sensation rather than of thought." He is a poet of the earth, and not like Shelley who soars into heaven. He is a poet of perception rather than of contemplation and speculation. But his sensuous mind constantly passes from sensuousness into sentiment. "He saw so far and so keenly into the sensuous as to be penetrated with the sentiment which, to a healthy and large nature, is its inseparable outcome." That is, he went on enjoying a sensuous beauty till his enjoyment became emotionalized of sentimental. "If the sensuous was his atmosphere, the breathing apparatus with *which he respired* it was sentiment. Thus, he is a passionate worshipper of beauty, wherever he perceived it with his senses in Greek mythology, in medieval legends, in art, great poetry, nature and human life. But he is content with describing the external loveliness of things. Of course, his delight in sensation is always controlled by truth and goodness, and never morbid or voluptuous. But in describing the sensuous loveliness of things, he never aims at conveying a philosophy. He delights in merely describing beauty for beauty's sake. The colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsating music, *i e.*, vivid sensations drawn from actual experience—these are the things that stir him to his depths. No landscape and no reason ever fails to inspire him. In the words of a critic, "he does not philosophize over nature ; he only paints her vividly and imaginatively. He is rather a painter of nature." In his sensuousness there is a tone of objectivity and his attitude is one of a pure artist. A gradual evolution in his sensuousness is clearly perceptible from his earliest poems to his last. His early poems exhibit a purely physical and objective sensuousness. But slowly his feeling for beauty deepened from physical sensation to emotion, and from emotion to a passion which embraced his whole moral and intellectual being in his *later poems*. Thus, his feeling for beauty did not altogether stop short at mere external loveliness. He was certainly moved by intellectual beauty as well, by beauty in humanity, in man as man, in the moral problem of the universe ; but only due to want of time in his short life he could not express it and remained a poet of emotionalized sensuousness.

His originality in respect of sensuousness consisted in this that he discovered in the most common objects either some rare beauty or sources of delight or comfort. But though he was indeed sensuous and keenly alive to physical beauty, he was never merely sensual, never a mere aesthetic voluntuary slopping short at external, loveliness and unmoved by intellectual or moral beauty. There are

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indications in some of his poems that he wanted to migrate from life of more sensations to one of intellectual and moral beauty, as in the following lines :

"And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?
Yes ; I must pass them for a noble life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife of human hearts?"

—(*Sleep And Poetry*).

And

".....forgetting the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares and life the thoughts of man."

—(*Sleep And Poetry*).

And

"No, no, I'm sure,
My restless spirit never could endure
To brood so long upon, one luxury." —(*Endymion*).

Moreover, he claimed his loyalty to truth through his worship of beauty and his belief that beauty and truth were indentical. Thus, in his cult of beauty he never sacrificed moral sensibility. Lastly, he had faith in "a life Sensation" because he believed that only sensations produced by the sight of a beautiful object and strong enough to excite an emotion could reveal truth.

His sensuousness is equally perceptible in his wonderful felicity of expression. Since he was a close observer of nature, the beauty of its sight, sound and smells flashed upon his keen imagination with great vividness, and with great felicity of phrase he excelled in describing them picturesquely. Every line of his poems is crowded with sensuous record; which gives the reader an exact feeling of colours, sounds, tastes and smells stored in them.

His Attitude towards Nature

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelly and Keats were all poets of nature, but in far different ways. Wordsworth and Shelly go behind the external phenomena of nature and philosophize over them. Wordsworth sees behind nature the Spirit of God, Shelley sees behind it the Spirit of Love and Liberty. They both spiritualize and intellectualize nature. They are concerned far less with depicting nature as it is than with marvelling at and exulting in its hidden significances. They are in a way, prophets of nature. On the other hand, Keats and Byron are primarily concerned with a frank expression of the sensuous joy derived from a close observation of nature's externals. They do not spiritualize or philosophize over nature. They are content with the beauties of its outward manifestations.

Keats is an ardent lover of the beauties of Nature. His appreciation of the common objects of nature is genuine and warm. But he knows what is beautiful in nature for its own sake, without any

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mystical or philosophical meaning or spiritual motive. He never tries to seek any moral meaning of spiritual message from natural phenomena. It is the sensuous beauty of nature that appeals to him most. That is why he is content to depict her through the senses. The colours, the scents, the touch, the pulsating music—these are things that stir him to his depths. Thus like a sympathetic observer, he watches and enjoys her beauty objectively, and faithfully depicts it in vivid and pictorial languages. His insight into her silent operations, which the common eye cannot see, is remarkable. In the words of Colvin, he seems to see things invisible to the physical eye, but which "are felt and divined rather than seen".

His Hellenism

Keats is truly hellenic in spirit. His hellenism is merely his imaginative escape from the world of reality. A worshipper of beauty that he was, he sought after it wherever he could find it. So he turned to Greek mythology and medieval romance for beauty which greatly fascinated him. But he knew little of Latin and none of Greek and, with what little he knew of Greek art and poetry from his reading of Chapman's *Homer* and the Elgin Marbles introduced to him by Haydon, he could as easily enter into the spirit of antiquity as Shakespeare could. According to Prof. Jebb, his "natural affinity with the Greek mind was certainly a surprising thing for a London-born son of a livery stable-keeper." Not only is his art classic, but his very temper is Greek, (a) No doubt, his poetry is ultra-romantic, but it also shows the restraint of the great classical masters. His hellenism may be considered in a number of other ways. (b) *Of all the English* poets he alone approaches the Greek in his cult of beauty. Of course, he has a passion only for the sensuous and the imaginative beauty, while the Greek conception of beauty went farther and included within its scope the beauty of intellect and character, too. (c) Again he has the Homeric simplicity and directness of expression. (d) Moreover, he resembless Homer and the Greek tragedians in his gift of the personification of the powers of nature as, for example, in his *Ode to Autumn* he personifies Autumn and the various activities of the season. (e) Lastly, he shows everywhere a great delight in the beautiful mythology of the Greeks. His hellenism may be summed up in the words of Sidney Colvin, thus : "He indeed resembles the Greeks in his vivid sense of the joyous and multitudinous life of nature, and he loved to follow them in dreaming of the powers of nature as embodied in concrete shapes of supernatural human activity and grace. Moreover, intuitions for every kind of beauty being admirably swift and true, when he sought to conjure up visions of the classic past or images from classic fable he was able to do so often magically well. To this extent Keats may be called Greek, but no further. The rooted artistic instincts of the (Greek) race, which taught them in all the arts alike.....to select and simplify, rejecting all beauties but the vital and essential.....these instincts had neither been implanted in Keats by nature, nor brought home to him by

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precept and example. Alike by his aims and his gifts, he was in his workmanship essentially romantic Gothic English."

His Pictorial Arts

Another equally important characteristic of Keats's poetry is its supreme pictorial quality. He is a painter in poetry and in many ways the precursor of the pre-Raphaelite movement. Even Tennyson is indebted for his pictorial arts to Keats. Keats's beautiful word-paintings are the result of his gift for accurate details and colourful images. They are so complete in colour, line and detial, and so full of concrete and plastic effects, that a painter can easily *and accurately* paint them on the canvas from his poems. His peotry is rich in pen-pictures. His pictorial art exhibits the following qualities :

(a) *Accuracy and Abundance of Details*. In Keats's pen-pictures there is an exuberance of details, but only the most significant and carefully selected details are put together to produce desired effect. In his poems too, we come across *condensed picture painted* with a few bold strokes of the pen. *Often we do not get such* pictures, as "sun-burnt mirth" in his *Ode to a Nightingle*, like his master Spenser's "Sea-shouldering whale" in the *Faery Queene*. He works up his picture by the cumulative effect of a number of details put together.

(b) Another quality of his pictures is *Their concreteness* or their palpable andplastic effect. They rise in the reader's mind in the form of tangible objects or models, and leave lasting impression upon the memory. They are never ethereal, airy and fleeting like those of Shelley. They are not abstract. He watches separate manifestations of beauty, and his imagination stays on each picture, patiently enjoying and portraying every minute and significant aspect of it, which is necessary for the production of a concrete effect. The reader's imagination can easily visualize *them in their* completeness. Even abstractions, like autumn, indolence, and melancholy, etc , are presented in a concrete form. In this, he is the exact opposite of Shelley, for while Shelley etheralizes the concrete and presents it in the abstract form, Keats presents even the abstract in the concrete form.

(c) Lastly, his pictures are highly sensuous. They have a strong appeal to the senses. They do not convey any spiritual or allegorical meaning. Here he departs from his master, Spenser, who enshrined a moral meaning in his sensuous pictures.

His Diction, Rhythm, and Music

Keats had greatly enriched his vocabulary by his intensive and wide reading of the great masters—Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser and Dryden, as well as his high great contemporaries. His vocabulary was marvellous, complete and unconventional. Besides, he was a past-master in the art of harmonizing thought and its expression, and had Shakespeare's gift of frequent imaginative phrase, melody and word-painting. Many of his pen-pictures and particularly those of *Grecian Urn* are perfect, and in his art of creating perfect pictorial

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effects he compares favourably with any good painter. He is very keenly alive to the splendour and beauty of word and phrase. His pen-pictures never fail to impart pure aesthetic delight to the reader's imagination and often he achieves the best pictoral effects by a single master-stroke of compound words. Besides, the melody of his verses is superb. According to Mr. Colvin, Keats imparts a rare charm and musical quality to his verses by richness of his vowel and diphthong sequences, and "rarely fails in delicacy of musical and metrical ear or in variety and elasticity of sentence structure. In short, the flow of his lines has a sweetness, a *rare lucidity and loveliness,* a lyric rapture, a wonderful felicity of phrase, profusion of compound words, and rare pictorial effects, which haunt the reader's imagination and leave a lasting and lingering impression upon it. In his great odes and sonnets his style and music become impassioned, *noble and perfect.* That is why Arnold rightly remarks, Shakespearean work it is not imitative indeed, of Shakespeare, but Shakespearean, because its expression has that rounded perfection and felicity of loveliness of which Shakespeare is the great master." Once Keats expressed the hope, "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." Arnold proclaims upon it. "He is ; he is with Shakespeare."

Style

To Keats, poetry was a joy for ever, while to Wordsworth, poetry was a spiritual vision and to Shelley it was an 'emancipating vision'. To the youthful poet, it was a joy 'wrought out of sensations as exquisite as Coleirdge's by an imagination not weird and mystic like his but plastic and pictorial.' His study of Milton, his interest in Greek mythology and "the Elgin Marbles had helped the antique and sculptural elements in his genius. In addition to his gift of luscious word-painting he possessed like the ancient Greeks the gift of absolutely direct and spontaneous expression of thought. Nature herself appears to speak for him. Shakespeare alone at his best can claim that distinction and Keats's poetical style always had that Shakespearean felicity. Words came to him as though by an inner law and when we read them we feel that they could not have been otherwise. We have that feeling because like the Hellenic poets from Homer to Bion and Moschus, Keats combined lucidity and sainty with simplicity. It is indeed astonishing how his dicton differs so little from prose while it is all the time purest of poetry. Charles Cowden Clarke had revealed to Keats a world of Elizabethan splendour of 'fire-new' words coming fresh to a generation weary of smooth-worn poetic verbiage and rigid metrical form. Hence, his poetical vocabulary is at times surcharged with Elizabethan verbal experiments and also with modern mannerisms, which conceal that native Hellenism first recognized by Shelley. Shakespeare has hardly displayed a nobler simplicity, a more complete directness of speech than Keats. His phrases, ever vibrant with meaning, have a freshness, which goes straight from his imagination to ours. We have similar experience from Shakespeare and from the ancient Greeks. The absolute

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sincerity and insight of the descriptive touches even in the 1817 volume are amazing.

Universality

In the case of Milton, classical learning in the language of Hartley Coleridge was 'amalgamated and consubstantiated with his native genius. Neither Keats nor Shakespeare had that advantage of classical erudition. Keats's mind as revealed in his poems and letters had the universality of Shakespeare. With him he shared that larger poetic sympathy or empathy, which could enable him to pursue always the cult of absolute beauty, of its identification with truth without any irritable tendency for abstract speculation. It is this innate universality which brought to both Shakespeare the mature poet and Keats who though writing greatly was not yet completely fulfilled, an ability to invoke without a ponderous weight of classical learning, a living echo of the ancient world.

Chamelon Poet

It is this Shakespearean empathy which enabled him to identify himself completely with immediate outside impressions of books, of people, of places, and of events. Everything that Keats wrote was really an amalgam of his life and reading. It is well known that Spenser was his obsession at eighteen, Wordsworth his idol at twenty, Milton and Leigh Hunt had made tremendous inroads into his style when the mood was on and Shakespeare was the latest and most powerful influence. But the impact of real life was deeply significant too in the making of this Chamelon poet. Take for instance *The Eve of St. Agnes*. It is a Romeo and Juliet story of two lovers, Porphyro and Madeline, surrounded by hyena foemen' and befriended by an old nurse to a happier end than Shakespeare's pair. It matches Shakespeare's play in romantic atmosphere and dramatic dialogue. His debts to Spenser, Shakespeare and possibly also to the romances of Mrs. Radeliffe may be easily recognized but the architecture of the opening lines of the poems is accurate and real and this springs from the actual contact between his creative imagination and the thing itself which is an ancient crypt of the 12th century visited during his brief stay in Chichester. Similarly the inimitable line :

'And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor'

is accounted for by the carpets, chairs tapestries, wide staircases and curtains of the Stansted house there. In the *Nightingale* Ode, the first two stanzas may recall Wentworth with its cellar but from the last line of st. 11, the landscape is of the mind visited and enjoyed before in his reading. Among books which he read with devotion and which influenced his poetry considerably, should be mentioned Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. In his own copy, he had marked several passages with sedulous care and the inspiration of many of his poems is directly traceable to them. The hero of Keats's *La Belle* is the same one who in Burton :

'.....wandered in the woods sad all alone,
Forsaking men's society, making great moan.'

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The famous lines in *Lamia*, Part I,

> "She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
> Vermilion-spotted, golden green, and blue ;
> Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
> Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd
> And lull of silver moons, that, as she breathed
> Dissolv'd or brighter shone'

are an unmistakable echo of a characteristic passage in Burton :

'Whiteness in the lily, red in the rose, purple in the violet, a lustre in all things without life.....sparkling diamond, the excellent feature of the horse, the majority of the lion, the colour of birds, peacock's tails, the silver scales of fish we beheld with singular delight and admiration.'

Trivial incidents of his life led to real good poetry at times. Playing cricket on a bumpy pitch at Hampsted Heath, Keats had got a black eye and brown applied leeches and administered laudanum to relieve his pain. As a result on the following morning, March 19, 1819 he had the 'longest lie in bed'. Keats wrote in a letter, 'Neither poetry nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me ; they seem rather like three figures on a Greek vase—a man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disfigurement.' This passing mood was enshrined some time later in his *Ode on Indolence*.

As has been noticed already, Keats's best work was produced between September 1818 and September 1819, which was published in the 1820 volume. Robert Gittings calls it the *Living* Year and observes that every work he had completed, excepting the odes and the sonnets, during this year, had been built on a common pattern—a luxurious feast, a banquet or eating and drinking accompanied by music, which is followed by some king of shock or revelation concerning a woman. In *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the revelation is a pleasant one. In *La Belle*, the knight at-arms is fed on,

> '.....roots of relish sweet
> And honey wild, and manna dew.'

He sleeps, has a ghastly vision and wakes alone. In *Lamia*, Part II, there is a wedding-feast. Lamia vanishes with a shriek and Lycius falls dead. It may be recalled in tnis connection that Keats had in October 1818, first visited Mrs. Isabella Jones in her room. It is just possible that its furniture, food, wine and music had been sublimated into poetry, though the woman in these poems need not be identified either with Isabella Jones or with Fanny Browne.

Inheritor of Unfulfilled Renown

Shelley in his *Adonais* calls him one of the inheritors of unfulfilled renown' which means that he was destined to possess or enjoy a much greater fame if he had lived longer. In which direction was

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he developing or how would he have fulfilled the higher destinies claimed for him by a brother poet and by so many of his admirers?

His claim to universal recognition as a great poet is his recognition of the principle of beauty. Beauty with him was the first and last word. In this respect as it has already been observed he was a true son of Hellas. He finds certainty and survival, or indeed truth in ideal beauty in the beauty of nature exemplified by the nightingale's song or in the other eternal beauty of art transfixed and transfigued for ever in the Grecian Urn. His delight in pure natural loveliness is clearly reflected in a prose passage which could hardly have been bettered in verse—'In truth, the great Elements we know of are no mean comforters; the open sky sits upon us like a sapphire crown; the air is our robe of state; the earth is our throne and the sea a mighty minstrel playing before it.' He had eaclaimed, 'O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts.' But this passion for simple sensuous beauty cannot be the final message of great poetry. The *Ode to Autumn* reflects the deep-seated calm, the joyful peace which the countryside always brought him if the pressure of the world did not intrude as his brother Tom's death obviously had done in the famous *Nightingale* Ode. In this realization of the principle of beauty he is unique and unsurpassed. The passion is Hellenic but the great Greeks also took the beautiful in its wider and deeper meaning. Their conception to beauty carried with it the ideas of eternal law, of divine justice, of the happiness of men on earth making it a heaven—all these constituted the field of the poetry and philosophy of ancient Greece. It is the same world which the myriad-minded Shakespear saw and opened unto us—the world of man with his passions, his joys and griefs and his destiny. Was Keats destined to love and know this world and transmit his love and knowledge to us through the medium of poetry? If he had lived longer, would he have been interested in the beauty of human action too? His *Lamia* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* show that he was definitely moving into this larger and loftier sphere. Life to him was no longer a vale of tears. It was already perceived as a vale of soul-making. In one of his letters he writes: 'Do you not see how necessary a World of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul?' Many of his friends and contemporary biographers have testified to the all-embracing receptivity and openness of his mind, his beautiful unselfishness and warmth of sympathy, not only for his brothers and sisters but for all those who had gathered round him.

It may be safely presumed that he was not to live for ever in the region of 'Golden-tongued Romance' and he was sure to burn through,

'.....the fierce dispute
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay'

and emerge triumphantly. The foollwing passage from *Lines on Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair* is still more significant in the study of the development of the poet's mind:

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'But vain is now the burning and the strife,
Prangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
With old Philosophy
And mad with glimpses of futurity !'

The phrase 'glimpses of futurity' reminds one of Milton's famous lines in *Il Penseroso* :

'Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.'

He had the same Miltonic passion for equipping himself for the lofty vocation of a poet with knowledge or what he called Philosophy and his zest for Philosophy continued unabated in spite of the cruel disease which had such a strange hold on him.

Miltonic in his passion for knowledge, he was Shakespearean in his conception of the kingdom of poetry which included the whole range of life and imagination, every affection of the soul and every speculation of the mind. It is true that of that kingdom, he could enter certain provinces only, those that naturally are attractive to the spirit of youth. Would he have been able to make the rest also his own ? The answer is definitely in the affirmative.

'Of all our poets excepting Shakespeare and Milton and perhaps Chaucer, he has most of the poetical character—fire, fancy and diversity.....there is an *effluence of power and light* pervading all his works, and a freshness such as we feel in the glorious dawn of Chaucer.' This is what Landor wrote in 1848 to Lord Houghton on receiving a copy of *Keats's Life and Letters*. The faculties which could reveal the hidden delights of nature, divine the true spirit of antiquity and conjure with the spell of the Middle Ages as he did in *Isabella*, *Lamia*, *La Belle* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the same faculties, would have enabled him to unlock the mysteries of the heart and to illumine and harmonize the great struggles of man still in obedience to the law of beauty. The height to which his poetic genius had risen between its first effervescence and its exhaustion due to failing health has never attained by any other poet at such a young age, Shakespeare needed a whole life's experience to come to the sage conclusion reflected in the following lines of *Hyperion*, Part II,

'.....to bear all naked truths
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty.'

His gossips and letters show a boundless sympathy for others, a remarkable capacity to live in the lives of others and testify to the 'glowing humanity of his nature.' 'By power and temperament he was the most Shakespearean spirit that has lived since Shakespeare.'

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21. KEATS'S INFLUENCE
Or
KEATS'S PLACE AS A POET

The Poets' Poet

Keats, like Spenser, is the poet's poet. (1) He influenced the subject-matter of poetry, in handling and informing in other souls the poetic love of nature for its own sake, and also, in equal degree, the love both of classic fable and of romance. (2) Secondly, there is the influence of form in setting before poets a certain standard of execution, a standard not of technical correctness, for which Keats never cared sufficiently, but of that quality to which he himself refers to when he is speaking of 'loading every rift of subject with ore.'

Keats is a poet for scholars because of his heavy reliance on Greek mythology and thought. He remains the unrivalled interpreter of the beauty of nature, he enters into the spirit of Greek mythology and expounds it to the modern world. He brought back to English literature the colour and mystery of old romances. In his poetry, he unites the imaginative freedom of Romanticism with the formal principles of classicism.

Rightly says *Legouis and Cazamian*, "His influence has never ceased to grow : all those schools which claim as their principle a plastic notion of art have seen in him their master ; the pre-Raphaelites, just as the English aesthetes, originate in part from him. Despite the concentrated and difficult quality of his language, the finer artists, in every nation, have felt the magnetic power of his example." Besides these the poets influenced by Keats are Hood, Tennyson, Arnold, Rossetti and his group, and Robert Bridges.

The Influence on Matter

Keats has influenced both the matter and manner of the succeeding generations of poets. He has kindled in the souls of other poets a love of the beauty of nature for its own sake, and also, in equal degree, the love both of classical literature and mythology and of the medieval world of magic, mystery and romance. It was his examgle which inspired Hood to write his poems of fairy and romance. Tennyson, the dominant poet of the Victorian age, was inspired by Keats to make use of what is most beautiful in Greek mythology and literature and medieval romance. Tennyson's *Palace of Arts* is highly influenced by Keats.

The medievalism both of Rossetti and Morris, their tales of love and chivalry, and their passion for the picturesque in the past, can be traced to the same source. Even the classical Matthew Arnold could not escape Keats's influence. Every line of Arnold's *Scholar Gipsy* reminds us of Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Keats's Influence on Manner

Keats's impact on the manner of poetry was quite [illegible] of the

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matter of poetry. As mentioned by Lowell, "Wordsworth has influenced most of the ideas of the succeeding generations of poets, Keats their forms." Keats always tried to achieve positive richness and felicity of phrase. His pictorial art, his rounded perfection of phrasing, his brilliant compound words and sensuous epithets have been a source of emotional inspiration to future poets. Tennyson, Arnold, Browning and the Pre-Raphaelites owe to him this thing or that thing in respect of manner. Tennyson found his close-packed, vivid metaphors, his numerous word-pictures, and his use of colour most useful for himself. Tennyson's *Lotos Eaters*, *Morte De Arthur*, *Maud*, etc., show the influence of Keats's artistry in every line. Browning's use of colour in *The Last Ride Together*, *By the Fireside*, etc., shows the influence of Keats. In the words of A. D. Jump, "Thyrsis, like the Scholar Gipsy, is memorable chiefly for its vivid, almost Keatsian re-creation of the landscape."

However it is on the Pre-Raphaelites and the aesthetes that Keats's influence is very obvious. Their picturesque style, their word-painting, and their effective use of sensuous imagery and detail, owe their inspiration to the youngest of the romantics. Rossetti's outlook, like that of Keats, was essentially that of a painter and it is for this reason that word-pictures are so numerous in his poetry. He equals Keats in his word-painting. Just compare the following lines of the *Blessed Damozel* rich in colour epithets.

"The Blessed Damozel learned out
From the golden bar of heaven,
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames."

with the sensuous epithets of Keats :

'Her bosom must have made
The bar she learned on warm.'

Swinburne's word-music also, to a large extent, results from his study of Keats. Keats's sonnets must have been an inspiring force to Robert Bridges and Hopkins.

Causes of Keats's Popularity.

In the first place, Keats has comparatively little mediocre writing. Secondly, Keats speaks to us directly almost as one of ourselves. We do not need to approach him through elaborate reconstruction of dead poetical fashions. The romantic element in him remained central, sane and normal. Thirdly, among the romantic poets, he alone consciously strove to escape from self-expression into Shakespearean impersonality. Fourthly, there is now-a-days a general understanding of the solid strength of Keats's mind and character and of his unceasing struggle to achieve poetic integrity. Fifthly, there is a personal interest of Keats's life vividly compressed in the short period of twenty-five years. Sixthly, of deeper interest in the drama of Keats's achievement and his astonishing development, All of us wonder how

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he reached at the top in a very short time. We wonder more because of his lack of advantages. He did not even try to write poetry before the age of eighteen or nineteen and what he wrote first is far from giving us any suggestion of his being a great poet. And lastly, there remains the richly varied character of Keats's own writing. It is because of this variety that every generation has found something of value in his work. Thus, not only the readers, but also the ciritics and even the poets have taken great interest in his poetry, Above all, he is the high priest of Beauty—Beauty, that is Truth, Truth that is Beauty.

Conclusion

Because of these reasons he is a popular poet and ranks below Shakespeare and Milton, with Wordsworth and Browning. "If judged by quantity, he cannot claim a position in the first rank though no other poet would stand higher if he had died at twenty-five ; but if judged by quality Keats must rank with the greatest moulders and creators of verse.'—(Wyatt).

Keats's influence continues to grow. Medievalism, art for art's sake, love of Beauty in all things, Pictorialism and conscious artistry, etc., are the legacy of Keats to future poets. As stated by Sidney Colvin, he stands in direct line of descent between the great Elizabethans and the poets of our own age, whom he has profoundly influenced both in their matter and manner.

22. SOME EXCERPTS FROM KEATS'S POETRY ILLUSTRATING VARIOUS FEATURES OF HIS ART & THOUGHT

(1)

His Conception of Beauty

"Light feet, dark violet eyes and parted hair
Soft dimpled hands, white neck and creamy breast".

× × × ×

"I met a lady in the Meads
Full beautiful a fairy's child
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild."

—*La Belle Dame Sans Merci.*

"Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for Heavgen's grace and boon ;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together, prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Shave wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

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Of all its wreathed pearls hair she frees ;
Unclaps her warmed jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half—hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed"

—*The Eve of St. Agnes.*

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,
Its loveliness increases ; it will never
Pass into nothingness ; but still will keep
A power quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
breathing

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealth and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching : yes, in spite of all
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits...
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead ;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour ; no even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast
They always must be with us, or we die."

—*Endymion.*

'She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die
And joy whose hand is ever at his sips
Bidding adieu ; and aching pleaure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips,
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
tongue

Can burst joy's grape against his palate fine ;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might
And be among her cloudy trophies hung."

—*Ode to Melancholy.*

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"When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of ther woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

—*Ode On A Grecian Urn.*

".....for it is Nature's law
That the first in beauty should be first in might."

—*Hyperion.*

(2)

His Treatment of Nature

"O ! maker of sweet poets, dear delight,
Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams,

Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,
Lover of loveliness, and wandering,
Of upcast eye, and tender ponderings,
Thee must I praise above all other glories
That smile us on to tell delight stories.
For what has made the sage or poet write
But this fair paradise of Nature's light ?"
"Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
The sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fumes of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers :
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

× × × ×

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;
Then in a wailful choir, the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud beat from hilly bourn ;

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Hedge-cricket sing ; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies."

—*Ode To Autumn.*

"I cannot see what flowers are at my feet.
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs :
But in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-free wild,
White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine,
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves,
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine.
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."

—*Ode To A Nightingale.*

"I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,
The air was cooling, and so very still
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride,
Pull dropingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty-leaved, and finely tapering stems.

× × × ×

The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn
And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves."

—*I Stood Tip-Toe Upon A Little Hill.*

".....such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shaddy boon
For simple sheep ; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in ; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season ; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms."

—*Endymion.*

(3)

His Escapism

"O for ten years, that I may overwhelm,
Myself in Poesy ; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed."

—*Sleep and Poetry.*

"Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret

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Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies ;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow."

—*Ode To A Nightingale.*

(4)

His Romanticism

"Ever let the Fancy roam
Pleasure never is at home."
"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird :
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid alien corn ;
The same that oft-time hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

—*Ode To A Nightingale.*

"Bold Lover, never, never, canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not the bliss,
For ever will thou love, and she be fair !

× × × ×

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest.
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk this pious morn ?
And little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e' er return."

—*Ode On A Grecian Urn.*

"She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
So kissed to sleep.

× × × ×

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I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all :
Who cried—'La Belle Dame Sans Merci
Hath there in thrall !"
I saw their starved lips in the gloom,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And awoke, and found me here
On the cold hillside."

—*La Belle Dame Sans Merci.*

(5)

His Hellenism

"Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness !
Thou foster-child of Silence and Slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
And flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Temple or the dales of Arcady ?
What men or gods are these ? what maidens loth ?
What mad pursuit ? what struggle to escape ?
What pipes and timbrels ? what wild ecstasy ?"

—*Ode On A Grecian Urn.*

"O latest-born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy !
Fairer than Phoeb's sapphire-regioned star.
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;

× × × ×

"O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest bows
Holy the air, the water, and the fire,

× × × ×

Yes I will be thy priest, and build a fame
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thought, new-grown with
pleasant pain,

× × × ×

And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lulled to sleep
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreathed trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without name,
With all the gardener fancy ev'r could feign

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Whose breeding flowers, will never breed the same,
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night
To let the warm love in !"

—*Ode to Psyche.*

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

—*On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer.*

(6)

Keats as an Artist

Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eramite,
Tho moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores
Or grazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors"

—*Bright Star.*

"That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease."

—*Ode to A Nightingale.*

"The tower of Troy, towers, something o'er their blaze
Stiff holden shields, far piercing spears, keen blades.
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks."

—*Endymion.*

"And like a rose is vermeil tint and shape.
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye.

× × × ×

Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers."

—*Hyperion.*

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness !
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run."

—*Ode to Autumn.*

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Keats's Sensuousness

"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of nemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk."

—*Ode to Nightingale*

23. HISTORY OF KEATS'S CRITICISM

The contemporaries of Keats, by and large, had a low opinion of Keats. It is a well known fact how the reviewers of the *Blackwood* and *Quarterly* journals severely criticised his works and some of them advised him to give up poetry and go back to his compounder's business. The early critics missed the whole of the forest and concentrated on only a few lines. They thought Keats to be a lily-livered aesthete. This view was corrected by Lord Houghton's Life Letters and Literary Remains (1848). All the later critics of Keats have followed the general lines sketched in Masson's 'Study of Keats' (1860). The fine comprehensive biography by Sir Sidney Colvin (1971) attempted a whole scale reconsideration of Keats. Colvin's book was followed by the two volume biography by Amy Lowell (9125). Colvin was Victorian and Edwardian in his approach to poetic style. Amy Lowell's approach too is fragmentary ; she could see in Keats much more than an early imagist.

John Middleton Murry's *Keats and Shakespeare* was an attempt in new directions. It compared Keats and Shakespeare. H. W. Garrod considered the traditional Keats, the poet of sensuous beauty. Then came the book of J. L. Lowes of Harvard. Claude Finney wrote two volumes : *Evolution of Keats' Poetry* (1936). Douglas Bush wrote *Mythology and Romantic tradition* (1937) to raise the reputation of Keats. M. R. Ridley brought out Keats's *Craftsmanship* (1937). C. Thorpe presented the first full and satisfactory analysis of the new philosophic Keats. H. E. Rollins wrote two volumes entitled *Keats Circle* (1943). Then came N. F. Ford's *The Prefigurative Imagination of John Keats* (1951) and F. R. Wasserman's *The Finer Tone* (1953).

Most modern criticism of Keats written during the 1920's and 1930's has been concerned mainly with the analysis of particular poems. Bate, Bloom. Harold Wilson, and Robin May-head have analysed the particular poems of Keats rather than the general characteristics of his poetry. Criticism of Keats after 1950 has been much more penetrating. Kenneth Muir, David Barkins, Ford and Wasserman have examined the symbolic aspects of Keats's poetry.

24. VIEWS OF LITERARY CRITICS

(1)

Keats earned his place in the tradition of English poetry by his courage to take the great dare of self-creation, his willingness to accept failure and move beyond it, his patience learing his craft from those

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who could teach him. His sober prophecy as he started '*Hyperion*'—'I think I shall be among the English poets after my death'—has been fulfilled ; as Matthew Arnold confirmed it sixty years later. "He is with Shakespeare."

—*Aileen Ward* ('John Keats—the Making of a Poet').

(2)

If in Keats' development from 'Endymion' to the Ode 'To Autumn' we see the promise of greatness, it lies in the marvellous vitality of the art that celebrates these joys (of sensuous beauty)—in the perfection attained within a limiting aestheticism...The achieved art itself implies, paradoxically, in the consummately kept limits of its perfection, something more serious than mere aestheticism.

—*F. R. Leavis* ('Revaluation').

(3)

These short poems (the Odes) are replete with wisdom and feeling, and—at their finest—their account of experience speaks straight to the hearts of men because it comes from a man better qualified than most other men to evaluate experience. The account is contained in highly concentrated language ; each sentence is put to work in the most profitable way, so that it is rich with all the possible meanings which are relevant to the theme of the poem, but no more. This is to load every rift with ore,' so that each crevice of the poem glistens with meaning, but does not demand too much attention of itself.

—*Fred Inglis* ('Keats').

(4)

The May Odes are philosophic poems based on Keats' April thought. Shot through with phrases and candendes from Keats' philosophic master, Wordsworth, they express a complete philosophy of his own, and in a style entirely his own.....They are the poems in which Keats' thought and essential nature finds totally its own poetic expression.

—*Robert Gittings.*

(5)

This life in the moment, and in the momentary joy and movement of all things in nature, was the source of his directness in description. This joy in the present, this absorption in the beauty of the hour, this making of it a divine possession, and losing in its loveliness the pain of life is one of the chief marks of his genius.

—*Stopford A. Brooke.*

(6)

Whereas Wordsworth spiritualises, and Shelley intellectualises Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses. The colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsating music—these are the things

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that stir him to the depth. There is not a mood of earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him.

—*Compton Rickett.*

(7)

The Odes as a group may be read as an investigation of the imagination's ability to cope with time and change ; the first three are mainly exploratory, and the final two are written, as it were, with the exploration over and an awareness of the result. —*Jack Stillinger* ('Twentienth Century Interpretations of Keat's Odes').

(8)

He indeed resembles the Greeks in his vivid sense of the joyous and multitudinous life of nature ; and he loved to follow them in dreaming of the powers of nature as embodied in concrete shapes of supernatural human activity and grace.

—*Courthope.*

(9)

With a rough second-hand knowledge of Greek art and culture, he grasped the secret of Hellenism in a way never attained by poets far richer than he in Hellenistic lore—Shelley, Landor, and Swinburne. He saw by the intuition of genius into the spirit of the people.

—*Compton Rickett.*

(10)

The Odes are not merely decorative and descriptive poems... They are in fact supreme examples of Negative Capability, "When a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." —*Graham Hough.*

(11)

Just as Byron finds the ultimate and most complete expression of his personality and temperament in 'Don Juan', so in the Odes does Keats give us most of his inmost self, and when he does so it is with the sure hand of the great artist.....the Ode to a Nightingale, the Ode on a Grecian Urn, the Ode on Melancholy, and the Ode to Autumn are among the mightiest achievements of English verse.

—*Compton Rickett.*

(12)

The perception in this Ode ('On Melancholy') is profound, and on doubt experienced. The paradox that Melancholy is most deeply felt by the organization most capable of joy is clinched at the end of the observation of the reaction which satiety provokes in such temperaments, so that it is also in the moment of extremists joy that it suddenly fades. —*Robert Bridges.*

(13)

In the Odes Keats has no master ; and their indefinable beauty is so direct and so distinctive an effluence of his soul that he has no disciple. —*De Selincourt.*

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(14)

Nothing like the Odes of Keats is to be found in English Literature of earlier date. He may be said to have created in them a new class of lyrical poetry. In the Odes he is at his best, and they will live as long as English poetry is read. —*Downer.*

(15)

Primarily I take Keats to mean (in the 'Ode on Melancholy') that joy and suffering are inextricably mingled, and that full involvement in joy leads inescapably to intense melancholy, a melancholy which becomes recurrent and incurable. Finally the intensity of the melancholy lends it a queer pleasure, because intensity is part of full living. It is also shortlived, which the poet regrets.....We cannot doubt the depth and power of his feeling, nor that the feeling is beautifully expressed, if incompletely judged. —*Fred Inglis.*

(16)

Beyond the awareness that all joy passes, and that life brings sorrow insurmountable by joy the Ode ('*On Melancholy*') explores the thought not only that joy and sorrow are inextricable, but that the deepest joys hold the deepest sorrows. Where the 'Grecian Urn' and the 'Nightingale' odes recorded an attempt to transcend the world of circumstances, the 'Ode on Melancholy' starts by condemning this attempt and turns to and meet the consciousness of light and shade full-face, even to advance toward it. Only the melancholy man can fully savour the most poignant beauty—the morning rose, the rainbow in the breaking wave, the flash of anger in his mistress's eyes—because he alone realises, in the very moment of seizing this beauty, that its perfection is 'but a little moment'. Melancholy is not only the result but the condition of the greatest intensity of experience.

—*Aileen Ward.*

(17)

It ('To Indolence') seems much more like an expression of the very frame of mind from which at this time, to varying degrees on various occasions, Keats found the raptures of poetic inspiration generate themselves—and do so, moreover, exactly because he was not seeking them. The other Odes document various aspects of this process of generation...And there are, of course, well known passages in Keats' 'Letters' which indicate that he regarded what might be called the embryonic condition of the mood conveyed by these poems as also the embryo of poetic inspiration.....In a word the Odes are not only products of what Keats himself called Negative Capability, but taken together are a uniquely full account of what it is like and how it develops.

—*John Holloway* ('The Cambridge Journal'. Vol. V.)

(18)

'To Psyche' is the Cinderella of Keat's great Odes.....'To Psyche' is neither unflawed nor the best of Odes, but to me it

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illustrates better than any other Keats' possession of poetic power in conjunction with what was for him an unusual artistic detachment—besides being a remarkable poem in its own right. This may be another way of saying that it is the most architectural of the Odes, as it is certainly the one that culminates most dramatically.

Kenneth Allott ('Essays in Criticism', Vol. VI).

(19)

In Ode to Psyche, Psyche symbolizes, of course, the soul in the old sense of the word, the sum total of the human consiciousness. For Keats, we may be sure, a most important component of that consiousness was the imagination. In promising to worship Psyche, he was announcing his intention allegorically of becoming a psychological poet, of analysing the human soul, of glorifying the imagination, of studying the human mind in order to show how an awareness of its complexity could enrich human experience.

—*Leonidas M. Jones.*

(20)

In the luxurious sanctuary, a place made lovely and inviting with all the resources of a poetic imagination and these resources are infinite.....Psyche will be disposed to welcome the visits of love. Perhaps the final implication (of 'To Psyche') are that whole-heartedness can never be lost while Psyche is willing to welcome love in her casement, and, less directly, that love, poetry and indolence are the natural medicines of the soul against the living death it must expect from 'cold philosophy.'

—*Kennet Allott.*

(21)

Keats chooses Psyche as the subject of his celebratory Ode because she stands for human soul, curious about the unknown, accustomed to suffering and loss, capable of union with the infinite gods, married to Love.

—*Fred Inglis.*

(22)

In our brisk, matter of fact way we are often tempted into a philistine response to the poem ('To Psyche'). Embarrassed by its sensuous loveliness we dismiss it is effeminate or overdone.....But if we strave tenderness, delicacy and refinement in ourselves we become to that extent dehumanized ; the poem nourishes those necessary qualities.

—*Fred Inglis.*

(23)

(In the 'Ode to a Nightingale') the poem plots the experience in which the invitation to a luxurious escape is investigated and declined. The claims of the world are harsh and repulsive ; the claims of poetry may be either rich and positive, or reductive and anaesthetic. The positives are affirmed; the luxury is discarded, and the poet

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returns to reality. What is, however, left unsure, is whether the harshness of the world re-enters along with its beauties when the poem ends. In fact, the poet himself does not know, and hence the poem is left in the air, the voice lifted on a question. There is no return to the tonic key, as there is in 'To Autumn' ; we have a great but unresolved poem. —*Fred Inglis.*

(24)

The 'Ode to a Nightingale' contains the highest, the fullest, the most intense, the most valuable mental experience which Keats can imagine. This is its centre, this is the basis of its unity. Within this unity, however, is a complex of feeling and thought which moves in alternate swellings and subsidences a series of waves, each with its attendant through. These waves, are not of equal height ; they rise gradually to a climax in stanza 7, and the rise subsides in the conclusion. —*Richard Harter Fogle.*

(25)

For most of the poem (Ode on a Grecian Urn) Keats beautifully engages us in the paradox of all art, which is not life itself, but is lovelier and purer and more intense than life. Art represents man's partial triumph over time—the urn lasts longer than the individual—and it affirms those moral values, he holds, more robustly than he can by himself. —*Fred Inglis.*

(26)

This poem (Ode to Autumn) is, for me, the only one Keats wrote about which one is tempted to make no reservations at all. It is as nearly perfect as such writing can be ; it is at any rate as great and as perfect as the best of Shakespeare's sonnets or of George Herbert's 'The Temple' or any other of the seventeenth-century masters. The subject is important in itself, and implies a great deal more about human experience than at first appears ; the writing is elegant, rich serene, and grave in all its details ; it is profound and civilized. Such a poem is an enduring nourishment to one's humanity, it alters one's vision of the world and it grafts imperceptibly into the spirit and the memory. —*Fred Inglis.*

(27)

It ('To Autumn') stands at the end of Keats' long, brave search to achieve the maturity of negative capability'. The rhythms of the seasons are inevitably the rhythms of man's life and Keats in enjoying this autumn accepts the brute fact of winter, and affirms faith in the ultimate but ceaselessly wonderful return of spring. So men die but the generations renew themselves. The poem experiences these facts and comes unflinchingly to terms with them.

—*Fred Inglis.*

(28)

The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is not a dream of unutterable beauty nor is the urn itself the sign of an impossible bliss beyond

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mortality. It has a precious message to mankind, not as a thing of beauty which gives exquisite delight to the senses, but as a symbol and prophecy of a comprehension of human life to which mankind can attain. —*Middleton Murry.*

(29)

(In 'On a Grecian Urn') Keats attains to a higher degree of philosophic though than in any other of his poems. It touches the philosophy of Art and the ethics of human life. —*Downer.*

(30)

The main theme of the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is not the supermacy of art over life, but rather the function of art in life .....Keats was supplementing his theory of art as creation of ideal beauty with a theory of art as revelation of the beautiful in the actual .....Art is man's highest endeavour in this world because it actualizes the ideal and it makes perceptible the presence of the ideal in the actual. —*Albert Gerard.*

(31)

Most satisfying of all the Odes, in thought and expression, is the *Ode to Autumn*.....In this Ode, form its inception to its close, matter and manner are not only superbly blended but every line carries its noble freight of beauty. The first stanza is a symphony of colour, the second a symphony of movement, the third a symphony of sound. The artist shapes the first and last, and in the midst the man, the thinker, gives us its human significance.

—*Compton Rickett.*

(32)

The 'sylvan historian' (*The Grecian Urn*) will recite its history to other generations. What will it say to them that 'formed experience,' imaginative insight, embodies the basic and fundamental perception of man and nature. The urn is beautiful and yet its beauty is based.....on a imaginative perception of essentials. Such a vision is beautiful but it is also true. The sylvan historian presents us with beautiful histories, but they are true histories, and it is a good historian. Moreover, the 'truth' which the sylvan historian gives' is the only kind of truth which we are likely to get on this earth, and, furthermore, it is the only kind that we have to have. The names, dates, and special circumstances, the wealth of data—these the sylvan historian quietly ignores. But mere accumulations of facts are meaningless. The sylvan historian does better that i it takes a few details and so orders them that we have not only beauty but insight into essential truth. —*Cleanth Brooks* ('The Well Wrought Urn').

(33)

All the other Odes, to a greater or lesser degree, protest and exclaim. At one point or another the note becomes a little shrill. Only 'To Autumn' simply accepts. It accepts the inevitability of the cycle. And in the acceptance there is joy.

—*Bernard Blackstone* ('The Consecrated Urn').

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(34)

"To Autumn" is the subtlest and most beautiful of all Keats's Odes, and as close to perfection as any shorter poem in the English language...The incredible richness of this Ode is such that it will sustain many readings, and indeed will demand them.

—*Harold Bloom* ('The Visionary Company : A Reading of English Romantic Poetry').

(35)

Of these three odes, 'On Indolence' in the main portrays a mood which is the embryo of the 'melancholy fit'. "To Psyche' celebrates the deity of one of its forms (love-melancholy), and 'On Melancholy' displays its growth and intensity and climax. The other two—perhaps the other three—odes centre upon particular things which have evoked or represented the experience for Keats himself.

—*John Holloway.*

(36)

Of these (great Odes) perhaps the two nearest to absolute perfection, the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost beauty, possible to human words, my be the 'Ode To Autumn and the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' : the most radiant, fervent and musical is that 'To a Nightingale' : the most pictorial is that 'To Psyche' ; the subtlest in sweetness of thought and feeling is that 'On Melancholy' Greater lyrical poetry the world may have seen than any that is in these ; lovelier it surely has never seen, nor ever can it possibly see.

—*Swinburne.*

(37)

Very broadly, the Odes are best considered as a series of closely related and progressive meditations on the nature of the creative process, the logical outgrowth of his involvement with Negative Capability.....The larger fromulation involves his habitual distrust of "Dogmas" and "seeming sure points of Reasoning", his preference for "sensation" and 'speculation" as opposed to thought, and his commitment, above all, to creativity as an expression of an evolving state of consciousness."

—*Stuart M. Sparry* ('Keats the Poet.').

(38)

Now, though it may be admitted that sight is the most important of the sense, yet this all but absolute identification of love of nature with sensibility to visual pleasures seems erroneous...In this respect I believe that one of the most remarkable characteristics of Keats is the universality of this sensuousness.

—*Massen.*

(39)

Sensuous beauty and meditation on sensuous beauty was the central experience of his life. It is in the Odes that he explores this most fully.

—*Graham Hough.*

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(40)

In his maturer performances, in the 'Odes' for example and in 'Hyperion', sensuousness is penetrated by sentiment, voluptuousness is permeated by vitality, and aestheticism is tempered by intellectualism. —*Charles Brandes.*

(41)

I suppose the Odes to be that part of Keats' poetry about which there is no doubt at all. Whatever else in his work is faulty, these (Odes) at least have immortal quality, these at least are exempt from cavil. —*Garrod.*

(42)

Beauty, with him was not only the open sesame to poetic life and truth, it was truth itself. The Method of the imagination, as opposed to reasoning and the scientific approach, is that of emotionalised intuitive perception. A sense of spiritual reality, which the mind apprehends imaginatively, then, or immediately rather than indirectly, is Beauty, this is also Truth. When Keats refers to Beauty in this sense, so far from limiting himself to mere sensuous beauty, he is speaking of something entirely out side the realm of the sensuous, except as physical objects may be its expression ; he means enduring universal truth—the Ideal as it were. —*Thorpe.*

(43)

Beauty is truth arrived at through the intuitive perception of an intellectualised imagination—an imagination weighted with experience with thought, with judgment. —*Thorpe.*

(44)

Keats had declared that 'what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth', and that 'sorrow is wisdom' ; and he had spoken of his 'migthy abstract Idea...of Beauty in all things'—in sorrow, as well as in joy. Beauty. wisdom and sorrow he had accepted as correlatives.

—*Kenneth Muir* ('Essays in Criticism', Vol. II).

(45)

Complex and baffling as Romanticism is to define, there can be little doubt that the heart of it...was what Keats in some observation on the poetical character once described as the 'egotistical sublime'—the call of original, distinctive personality. the impassioned belief in individualism, the use of poetry primarily for self-projection, self-analysis, self-assertion ; and ultimately sometimes for exhibitionism and self-gratification...Keats noty dissented from this article but consiciously and consistently maintained an antithetical belief. Against poetry of the Wordsworthian or 'egotistical sublime,' introverted writing that draws all experience into the poet's ego and insists on shaping it to those subjective attitudes and beliefs that constitute 'character', Keats upheld the ideal of a selfless, unrestricted, outflowing sensibility—a poetry of which drama is the highest form.

—*E. C. Pettet* 'On the Poetry of John Keats',

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(46)

However, while Keats' work contains much that is remote from the main body of Romantic poetry, is also belongs to its historical time and place. For all the large exceptions we must make, Keats is an English Romantic poet, and if we ignore this fact we are always in danger of lapsing into unsound and even unsympathetic criticism.

—*E. C. Pettet.*

(47)

Matthew Arnold on Keats's Love of Beauty

"The truth is that 'the yearning passion for the Beautiful which was with Keats, as he himself truly says, the masterpassion, is not a passion of sensuous and sentimental poet. It is an intellectual and spiritual passion. It is 'connected and made one' as Keats declares that in his case 'it was with the ambition of the intellect. It is, as he again says, 'the mighty abstract idea of Beauty in all things.' And in his last days Keats wrote : 'I should die I have left no immortal work behind me nothing to make my friends proud of my memory but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had time I would have made myself remembered. He has made himself remembered, and remembered as no merely sensuous poet could be : and he has done it by having "loved the principle of beauty in all things".

For to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth, and Keats knew it. 'What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, he says in prose ; and in immortal verse he has said the same thing—

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
Yet know on earth, and all ye need to know.

No, it is not all ; but it is true deeply true, and we have deep need to know it. And with beauty goes not only truth, joy also goes with her ; and this too Keats saw and said, as in the famous first line of his Endymion it stands written—

'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever',

It is no small thing to have loved the principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with truth, and of body with joy. Keats was a great spirit, and counts for far more than many even of his admirers suppose, because this just and high conception made itself clear to him." —*Matthew Arnold.*

(48)

Rossetti on Keats's Sensuousness

"Sensuousness has been frequently described as the paramount bias of Keats's poetic genius. This is, in large measure, unassailably true. He was a man of perception rather than of contemplation or speculation. Perception was with perceptible things, perceptible things must be objects of sense, must *ipso facto* be a mind of the sensuous order. But the mind which mainly sensuous by direct action

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may also work by reflex action, and pass from sensuousness into sentiment. It cannot fairly be denied that Keats continually did thus; it had direct action potently, and reflection amply. He saw so far and so keenly into the sensuous as to be penetrated with the sentiment which to healthy and large nature, is its inseparable outcome. We might say that if the sensuous was his atmosphere the breathing apparatus with which he respired was his sentiment. In his best work —for instance, in all the great odes—the two things are so intimately combined that the reader can only savour the sensuous nucleus through the sentiment its medium or vehicle. One of the most compendious and elegant phrases in which the genius of Keats has been defined is that of Leigh Hunt : "He never beheld an oak tree without seeing the Dryad." In immediate meaning, Hunt glances here at the mythical sympathy or personifying imagination of the poet; but if we accept the phrase as applying to the sensuous object— painting, along with its idea, aroma or suggestion in his finest work, we shall still find it full of right significance.

By his early death he was doomed to be the poet of youthfulness; by being the poet of youthfulness he was privileged to become and to remain enduringly the poet of rapt expectation and passionate delight." —*Rossetti.*

(49)

Swinburne on Keats's Lyrics

"Within the limits of that work must we look of course for the genuine credentials of his fame; and highest among them we must rate his unequalled and unrivalled odes. Of these perhaps the two nearest to absoulute perfection, to the triumphant achievement and accomplishment of the very utmost beauty possible to human words, may be that to Autumn and that on a Grecian Urn; the most radiant fervent, and musical is that to a Nightingale; the most pictorial and perhaps the tenderest in its ardour of passionate fancy is that to Psyche; the subtlest in swiftness of thought and feeling is that on Melancholy. Greater lyrical poetry the world may have seen than any that is in these; lovelier it surely has never seen nor even can it possibly see. From the divine fragment of an unfinished Ode to Maia we can but guess that if completed it could have been worthy of a place beside the highest. His remaining lyrics have many beauties about them but none perhaps can be called thoroughly beautiful. he has certainly left us one perfect sonnet of the first rank; and as certainly he has left us but one."

(50)

Robert Bridges on Keats's Imaginative Power and Pictorial Quality

In these detached criticisms many of the main qualities of Keats's poetry have been incidentally brought out; there is one as yet unmentioned which claims the first place in general description, and that is the very seal, of his poetic birth—right, the highest gift of all

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in poetry, that which sets poetry above the other arts ; I mean the power of concentrating all the far-reaching resources of language on one point, so that a single and apparently effortless expression rejoices the aesthetic imagination at the moment when it is most expectant, and exacting and at the same time astonishes the intellect with a new aspect of truth. This is only found in the greatest poets and is rare in them ; it is no doubt for the possession of this power that Keats has been often likened to Shakespeare, and very justly, for Shakespeare is of all poets the greatest master of it ; the difference between them here is that Keats's intellect does not supply the second factor in the proportion or degree that Shakespeare does ; indeed, it is chiefly when he is dealing with material and sensuous subject that his poems afford illustrations : but there are as far as they go, not only like Shakespeare, but often as good as Shakespeare when he happens to be confining himself to the same limited field.

Closely allied to these imaginative phrases, and perhaps more characteristic of Keats and peculiar to him, are the short vivid picture which may be called his masterpieces of wordpainting in which with a few words he contrives completely to furnish a picture which is often of a vast size. Good examples of this are the sestet of the Leander, the last four lines of Chapman's Homer; the passage beginning Golden his Hair in Hyperion ii, 371 : and to quote one from Endymion—

> "The woes of Troy, towers smoethering o'ver their blaze,
> Stiff-holden shields, for piercing spears, keen blades,
> Struggling, and blood and shrieks."

For wealth in such rare strokes of descriptive imagination Keats's poetry must always take the first rank ; and it is his imaginative quality of phrases which sets him more than any other poet of his time in creative antagonism to the eighteenth century writers."

—*Robert Bridges.*

(51)

Courthope on Keats's Genius

'The poetry of Keats exhibits the progressive efforts of a man of powerful genius to create for his imagination an ideal atmosphere, unaffected by the social influence of his age, by conceiving of external Nature in the mythological spirit of pagan times, and by giving expression, in metrical words to the ideas so conceived, in a manner resembling the art of those who imitate external objects by means of form and colour. His dominant qualities as a poet are an emotional sensibility swayed by a voluptuous perception of beauty in natural things, and a brilliant fancy which enables him readily to abstract ideal forms from objects presented to his eyes. Historically, the interest of his career lies in three consecutive stages, the first of which shows his gradually passing out of the mood of philosophical Nature worship and the introspective of Wordsworth into the mythological methods proper to Greek polytheism ; the second throws light upon the manner

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in which the classical Renaissance, on its purely literary side, is related to this moment of Romantic art, while the third is the period of matured artistic accomplishment, when Keats had discovered by experience the limits within his genius could move with freedom."

—*Courthope.*

(52)

Gosse on Influences on Keats

"It is impossible not to recognize that Keats has been the master spirit in the evolution of Victorian poetry. Both Tennyson and Browning, having in childhood been enchained by Byron, and then in adolescence by Shelley reached manhood only to transfer their allegiance to Keats whose influence to English poetry since 1830 has not beea less universal than of Byron on the literature on the continent. His felicities are exactly of a kind to stimulate a youthful poet to emulsion, and in spite of what he owes to Italians to whom he went precisely as Chaucer did, to gain richness of poetical texture—the speech of Keats has a true British richness. No poet, save Shakespeare himself, is more English than Keats : none presents to us in the harmony of his verse, his personal character, his letters and his general tradition, a figure more compeletely attractive, nor better calculated to fire the dream, of generous successor."

—*Edmund Gosse.*

(53)

Brandes on Keats's Naturalism

"Keats' poetry is the most fragrant flower of English Naturalism. Before he appeared, this Naturalism had a period of vigorous growth. Its active principle had been evolved by Wordsworth, who developed it so methodically that he divided his poems into groups, corresponding to the different periods of human life and the different faculties of the soul. Coleridge provided it with support of a philosophy of nature which had a strong resemblance to Schelling's. In Scott it assumes the highly successful form of a study of men, manners, and scenery, inspired by patriotism, by interest in history, and by a wonderful apprehension of the significance of the race. Both inMoore and in Keats it takes the form of the perceptions of beings whose sensitiveness to impressions of the beauty of the external world makes that of the average human being seem blunt and dull. But the sensuouness of Moore's poetry, which reveals itself artistically in his warm, bright colouring, is confined to the erotic domain, and is of a light and playful character. Keats's is full—blooded, serious sensuousness, by no means especially erotic, but all embracing, and in this, its comprehensiveness, one of the most admirable developments of English Naturalism. This Naturalism led Wordsworth into one extreme which has already been referred to ; Keats led it into a different and more poetical one."

—*George Brandes.*

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(54)

Brandes on Keats's Art

"Keats was more of the artist than any of his English brother-poets. He troubled himself less about principles than any of them. There is no groundwork of patriotism in his poetry as there is in Scot's and Moore's or message of liberty, as in Shelley's and Byron's, it is pure art owing its origin to nothing but the power of imagination. It was one of his favourite sayings, that the poet should have no principles, no morality, no self. Why ? Because that true poet enjoys both light and shade—has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. All poets who have forgotten themselves in theme of their flights of fancy, when engaged in production, to the best of their ability banished their private peculiarities and preferences. Few have managed to make such a clean sweep as Keats of their personal hopes and enthusiasms, and principles. His study was, as one of his admirers has said, "A painter's study with very little in it besides the easel."

Keats's poetical indifference to theories and principle was, however, in itself a theory and a principle—was the philosophy which has its foundation in poetic worshpip of Nature. To the consistent pantheistic poet all forms, all shapes, all expressions of life on earth, which engaged the imagination, are precious, and all equally precious. Keats, as poet recognises no truth of the kind that means improvement of exclusion : but he has an almost religious faith in imagination as the source of truth. In one of his letters he expressed himself thus—"I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth, whether it existed before or not :—for I have the same idea all our passions as of Love : they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential beauty.....The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream ; he awoke and found its truth". He enlarges on difference between this kind of truth and the truth arrived at with consecutive reasoning, and concludes with an exclamation which is key to the whole of his poetry—However it may be. O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts. ! —*George Brandes.*

(55)

Maine on Keats's Poetry

If the Romantic sense of the oneness of nature found its highest exponent in Shelley, the Romantic sensibility to outward impression reached its climax in Keats. For him life is a series of sensations, felt with almost febrile acuteness. Records of sight and touch smell crowd every line of his work ; the scenery of a garden in Hampstead becomes like a landscape in the tropics, so extraordinary, vivid and detailed in his apprehenison and enjoyment of what it has to give him. The luxuriance of his sensation is matched by luxuriance of his powers of expression. Adjectives heavily charged with messages for the sense, crowd every line of his work, and in his earlier poems overlay so

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heavily the thought they are meant to convey that the sense and sequence of structure is apt to be smothered under their weight. Not that consecutive thought claims a place in his conception of his poetry. His ideal was passive contemplation rather than active mental exertion, "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts." he exclaims in one of his letters ; and in another, "It is more noble to sit like Jove than to fly like Mercury." "His word has one message and one only, the Lastingness of beauty and its supreme truth. It is stated in *Endynion*, it is stated in his greatest ode.

"Beauty is truth, truth Beauty, that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know."

His Work has its Defects. He died at twenty six, so it would be a miracle if it were not so. He lacks taste and measure ; he offends by an over-luxuriousness and sensuousness he fails when he is concerned with flesh and blood : is apt, as Mr. Robert Bridges has said, "to class women with roses and sweetmeats. "But in his short life he attained with surprising rapidity and completness to poetic maturity and perhaps from no other poet could we find a thing to match is greatest. Hyperion, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and Odessey.

—*Maine.*

(56)

Compton-Rickett on Keats's Idealism

Intellectually Keats was strongly in sympathy with Shelley and Byron. Indeed in religious philosophy he was really more extreme, more whole-heartedly pagan than either. Byron, for all his cynicism, never freed himself entirely from the spell of Christianity, and Shelley's transcendental fervour is for more obvious than his so called atheism. But Keats had no religion save the religion of beauty, no God save Pan ; the Farth was the great consoler, and so Passsionately did he love her, with a love far more concrete and personal than that of Wordsworth or even Shelley, that no other consideration impinges upon his work. So, whatever his political sympathies were, he never suffered them to colour his poetry. He fled from the work-a-day world into enchanted realm of his own jealous closed against the intrusion of ordinary human affairs. Shelley's idealism is continually coloured by his revolutionary ardour. Keats's idealism reflects nothing of the life of his day. He took from Mediavalism and Hellenism material for fashioning his sequestered land of beauty, but what he found here he used for sensuous delights, not ethical inspiration.

To Scott the appeal of the landscape lay in its historical associations ; to Keats in its legendary inspiration. As Leigh Hunt said of him, "He never beheld the oak tree without seeing the Dryad."

At the same time it is well to remember that his artistic eclecticism so uncongenial to some minds was the eclecticism of youth. There are indications towards the end of his brief career which show that he was approximating gradually to the actualities of life ; and in

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criticising his exclusive preoccupation with Aready and Fairyland, we must make allowance for the rich, artistic endowment of a very young man who responded more readily to the glories of art than to the problems of life. None of his contemporaries saw more clearly than he, precisely where Pope and his school failed. It was not merely a matter of prosody ; not merely a question of subject matter Town *Versus* Country. Keats reproached Pope as :

> ".....forgetting the great and
> Of Poetry, that it should be friend
> To soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man."
>
> —*A History of English Literature.*

(57)

Compton-Rickett on Keats As a Poet of Nature

Where Wordsworth spiritualises, and Shelly intellectualises Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses : the colour the scent, the touch, the pulsating music, these are the things that stir him to his depths ; there is not a mood of Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him, "The setting sun will always set one to rights, or if a sparrow comes before my window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel."

When first he began to write, the wealth of his perceptive life bewildered and embarrassed him. The influence of the medieval Italy and its store of legend, the pastoral sweetness and sensuous beauty of Spenser coming upon him in his abnormal sensibility. He owed much to his friend. Leigh Hunt for wise and generous encouragement direction ; and at the time when he was all tremulous with delight at the imaginative feast before him, there came another revelation, the revelation of Greek Art and Life through the medium of Chapman's Homer. The splendid sincerity of that famous sonnet attests the mental state of the man :

> "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken ;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien."
>
> —*Compton-Rickett.*

(58)

Compton Rickett on Keats's Influences

Among the informative influences in his work, Spenser stands first, but Chaucer and Milton influenced only in a secondary degree his poetic style and vocabulary ; lesser poets, like Chapman, William Browne, and his friend Leigh Hunt, affected him especially in his early work, in his choice of words and phrases and in his search for colour. But the finest part of Keats' work owes nothing to a derivative source.

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In the fragmentary Ode of Maia, with its purity of phrase and chastened beauty, there are no echoes, no obligations :

"O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span
Of heaven and few ears,
Rounded by thee, my song should die away
Content as theirs
Rich in the simple worship of a day."

Perhaps his most notable divergence as a poet, from his contemporary Shelly, is that he elects, as a rule, to deal with sensations rather than ideas with concrete life than with abstract imaginings—Sight and hearing respond to ideas toch, to sensations. The metaphysical power that charges with intellectual fire the visions of Shelley, is outside of his scope. Not that he eschews ideas, the Odes eloquently refute such a suggestion ; but when he elects to deal with ideas, he chooses such human things as love, sorrow, life, and beauty, and presents them in concrete shape :

"The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores".
"She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair."

Thus do his ideas, like his memory, become incarnate with the shaping splendour of the consummate Artist ; and thus does he help us to realise, as no other poet has done since Shakespeare, the oneness of Truth and Beauty.

—*Compton-Rickett*, A History of English Literature.

25. THE LETTERS OF JOHN KEATS

Introduction

John Keats's letters express him better than his poems. These distinguish him as M. B. Forman says, "from the general romantic chorus". "His letters are a record of a growth of a poet's mind and personality. According to T.S. Eliot, it is "manifested more clearly in his letters than in his poems." "The letters" he says, are "certainly the most notable and the most important ever written by any English poet.....His letters are what letters ought to be : the fine things come in unexpectedly, neither introduced nor shown out, between trifle and trifle."

Some Relevant Extracts From Keats's Letters

(i) To Amy Lowell

"I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of Heart's affections and the truth of imagination. What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth whether it existed before or not. For I have the same idea of all our passions as of love ; they are all in their sublime, creative of essential beauty.....The imagination may be compared to

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Adam's dream ; he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth ; by consecutive reasoning.....However it may be. O, for a life of sensation rather than of thoughts."

(November 22, 1817)

"We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us and if we do not agree, seems to put its comments in its breeches pocket. Poetry should be great and unobstrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul and does not startle it or amaze is with itself but with its subject. How beautiful are the retired flowers : How they would lose their beauty, were they to throng into the high way crying out. 'Admire me a violet.' Dote on me, I am a primrose." (Feb. 3, 1818)

(ii) To Taylor

"In poetry I have a few axioms. First, I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity. It should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thought, and appear almost a rememberance. Second, its touches of Beauty should never be halfway, thereby making the reader breathless instead of content .....But it is easier to think what poetry should be than to write it... and this leads me on to another axiom. That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all....."

(Feb. 27, 1818)

"Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict.....I was never afraid of failure for I would sooner fail than not to be among the greatest." (Oct. 8, 1818)

(iii) To Reynolds (Aug. 1819)

"I am convinced more and more, day by day that fine writing is next to fine doing, the top thing in the world.....the soul is a world of itself and has enough to do in its own home those whom I know already and who have grown as it were a part of myself, I could not do without but for the rest of mankind they are as much a dream to me as Milton's Hierarchies.....I think if I had a free and healthy and lasting organization of heart and lungs as strong as an ox's, so as to be able to bear unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness. I am obliged continually to check myself and strive to be nothing.....I have nothing to speak of but myself and what can I say but what I feel.

"I compare human life to a large mansion of many apartments two of which I can only describe—the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me. The first we stop into, we call the infant or thoughtless chamber in which we remain as long as we do not think. Second chamber is the chamber of maiden thought. Then we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant

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wonders and delaying these for delight. Third chamber, gentle one stored with the wine of love and the bread of friendship."

(May 3, 1818)

(iv) To Shelley (Aug. 16th, 1820)

"You might curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist and load every rift of your subject with art."

"A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no identity—he is continually in for informing, perhaps and filling some other body. The sun, the moon, the sea and men and women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute. The poet has none, no identity. He is certainly the most unpoetical of God's creature." (Out. 27, 1818)

"Look at the poles and the sands of Africa whirlpools and volcanoes. Let men exterminate them and I will say that they may arrive at earthly happiness. The point at which Man may arrive, is as far as the parallel state in inanimate nature and no further. For instance, suppose a rose to have sensation, it blooms on a beautiful morning, it enjoys itself—but there comes cold wind, a hot sun; it cannot escape it, it cannot destory its annoyances: They are as native to the world as itself; no more can man be happy in spite, the worldly elements will prey upon his nature.....call the world if you please—'The vale of soul making." (May, 1819)

(v) To Richard Woodhouse (October 27, 1818)

"As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything. I am member: that sort of distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical sublime; which is a thing *per se*, and stands alone, (it is not itself—it has no self—It is everything and nothing—it has no character it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated —It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imager. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm than from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation. A poet is the unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity—he is continually in for and filling some other body. The sun, the Moon, the sea, and men and women who are creatures of impulses, repoetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute, the poet has none, no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures. If then he has no self, and if I am a poet—where is the wonder that I should say I would write on more ?..... when is the wonder that I should say if I ever am free from Speculating on creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of everyone in a room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated."

(vi) To George and Georgiana Keats (Friday, March 19, 1819)

"This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless—I long after a stanza or two of Thomson's castle of

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Indolence—my passions are all asleep, from my having slumbered till nearly eleven, and weakend the animal fibre all over me, to a delightful sensation, about three degrees on this side of faintness. If I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lilies I should call it langour, but as I am, I must call it laziness. In this state of effiminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain, no unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me ; they seem rather like figures on a Greek Vase—a man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. This is the only happiness and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering the Mind."

(vii) To James Rice (Wentworth Palace, February 16, 1820)

"Let us hope for the best, as you say. I shall follow your example in looking to the future not good rather than brooding upon the present ill. I have been so worn with lengthened illnesses as you have, therefore cannot answer you on your own ground with respect to those haunting and deformed thoughts and feelings you speak of. When I have been or supposed myself in health I have had my shape of them especially within the last year. I may say that for six months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom over—spread me or I was suffering under some passionate feeling or if I turned to versify, that acerbated the poison of either sensation. The beauties of nature had lost their power over me. How astonishingly (have I must premise that illness, as far as I can judge in so short a time, has relieved my mind of a load of deceptive thoughts and images and makes me perceive things in a true light)—how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us : Like poor Falstaff, though I do not babble. I think of green fields I must with the greatest affection on every flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a Superhuman fancy."

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1

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

I

My hert aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodius plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

II

O for a draught of vintage ! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth !
O for a breaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth ;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim.

III

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, and, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs ;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

IV

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards ;

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Already with thee ! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is no her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

V

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
No what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
Fast-fading voilets cover'd up in leaves ;
And mid-May's eldest child
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on Summer eves.

VI

Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath ;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy sonal abroad
In such an ecstasy !
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have earg in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

VII

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !
No hungry generations tread thee down ;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown :
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home.
She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic easements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

VIII

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.

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Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis burried deep
In the next valley-glades ;
Was it a vision, or a walking dream ?
Fled is that music :—do I wake or sleep ?

PARAPHRASE AND EXPLANATIONS

Stanza 1. The poet listens to the song of the nightingale and his heart aches with excess of joy. A drowsiness overtakes him, as if he had drunk some opium preparation or any other intoxicant. He envies the happy lot of the bird and wishes to reach the 'beachen green' where he supposes the bird is singing with such full-throated ease. He wants to partake in her happiness.

Expl. *My heart aches.. .....had sunk.*

These lines constitute the opening of Keats's *Ode to Nightingale.* The poet is fascinated by the song of a nightingale singing in a grove near the home of his friend Brown, where he was staying at the time. The poet's heart feels pain due to the very excess of his joy, so sweet is the song of the nightingale. He feels intoxicated with its sweet melody, as if he had drunk to his full some opium preparation or the juice of hemlock. A drowsy numbness overtakes him. His senses become dull and lethargic and he forgets everything of the past, as if he had drunk the water of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in the under-world.

In these lines, the poet has described the mood of complete lethargy, when fibres of the mind and body are completely relaxed, and one reclines half-sleep with the mind conscious of nothing but its own vacuity.

Stanza 2. The poet longs for a draught of cool wine which has been cooled by being burried for a long time in the deep-dug earth. He longs for the precious wine made in South France wine which reminds him of the Roman goddess, Flora, and the festivities in her honour. Under the effect of such wine, the poet will escape from this world into the happy world of the nightingale.

Expl. *O for a draught of.....into the forest dim.*

The poet listens to the song of a nightingale and his heart aches with the very excess of joy at the sweetness of the song. He longs for a draught of cool wine, which has been cooled for a long time by being buried deep down in the earth. He wants a beaker full of the precious wine mode in South France. The Southern Districts of France, known as Provence, are famous for their wine. They are also known for their singing, dancing and merry-making on the occasion of the yearly festival of the goodess Flora, the Roman goddess of spring. The wide reminds him by association of this merry-making, and of the goddess Flora.

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This red wine will inspire him just as the water of Hippocren the Fount of the Muses, was supposed to inspire those who drank of it. The poet then lingers to describe the beaker full of the rich red wine, which suggests to him the picture of a dancing girl, blushing and winking at her lover, so to say. The wine is as red as the blushes of the girl and the bubbles rising and breaking on the surface remind the poet of the closing and opening of her eyes. The edges of the cup are also red, as red as her lips dyed red.

The poet wants to drink such precious wine, and under its intoxication to escape unseen from this unhappy world to the thickly shaded grove of beech trees where the nightingale is singing.

Comments. The passage throws valuable light on the sensuousness of Keats. It is specially remarkable for its techni-colour pictures which succeed one another. It reveals the poet's sense of colour and his voluptuous imagination.

Stanza 3. The poet longs to escape from this miserable world to the happy world of the nightingale. He wants to forget in this way the sorrow and suffering which the bird has never experienced in her grove of beech trees.

Stanza 4. In the previous stanza the poet had wished to fly to nightingale under the effect of wine. However, now he rejects the idea. He now intends to fly there on the viewless wings of poetry. He would escape from this wretched world on the wings of his poetic imagination. Such is the power of imagination, that the very next moment he finds himself in the, "beechen grove" listening to the song of the bird.

Stanza 5. It is so dark that the poet cannot see what sweet-smelling flowers are growing at his feet and on the trees round him. He can only guess them by their sweet smell. He gives us an account of the various flowers he supposes to be growing in the grove, and the nightingale and her song are for the moment forgotten.

Stanza 6. The poet listens to the song of the nightingale in the dark. He has always loved a painless death, but now death seems to him more welcome than ever before. He wishes that he may die at mid-night a painless death with the sweet song of the nightingale pouring into his ears. He will die, but the nightingale would continue to song. In this way the transitoriness of human life is contrasted, "with the permanence of the song-bird's life meaning the life of the type."

Stanza 7. The nightingale will never die. It will continue to sing for ever. The song was heard in ancient time, both by emperor and clown. It is the same song which was heard by Ruth as she stood, sick for home, with tears in her eyes, in the cornfield of her husband. It is the same song which must have been heard by maidens imprisoned all alone in magic castles in fairylands. The permanence of art is thus emphasised as against the transitoriness of individual life.

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Exp. *Charmed magic.....forlorn.*

The reference in these lines is to the fairy tales of the middle ages which often told the story of some maiden made captive by some wicked magician in some enchanted castle. The windows of which looked out upon a dangerous ocean full of foam as a result of the rise and fall of of stormy waves. Such maidens felt quite *forlorn* or *lonely* in their captivity. However, their hearts were cheered by the song of the nightingale which reached them through the open window. It is that very song which the poet has been listening to on the night in question. Thus the song of the bird is immortal, while individual life is temporary and short lived.

Stanza 8. The use of the word 'forlorn' in the previous stanza reminds the poet of his own loneliness. The charm is broken, and the poet again returns to reality. He realises that imagination cannot make one forget the facts of life for any length of time. The sad song of the nightingale gradually dies away. The poet is not sure whether it was all a dream or did he, in reality hear, the sweet song. He is not sure whether he was awake or asleep all the time.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF 'THE ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE'

The Occasion of the Poem

The poem was written in April 1819 when Keats was staying with his friend Charles Brown at Wentworth Palace, Hempstead. A nightingale had built its nest near the house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song, and one morning he took his chair to the grass-plot under a plum tree, where he set for two or three hours. When he returned he had the ode ready in his hands. Thus the ode is a spontaneous expression of the poet's joy in the song of the nightingale.

The Theme of the Poem

"In part the *Ode to a Nightingale* is a very triumphant song to Death, in part it is a song of despair as the song of the bird is in part an invitation to the supreme acstasy of Death. In part the voice of immortality is sounding clearly amid the agony of mortality."

Keats, listening to the Nightingale's song, is oppressed by its beauty and joy (*Stanza 1*). He longs to escape to the world of the forest by the aid of a cup of wine (*Stanza 2*). He longs to escape far from the madding strife, the fever and fret, the cares and sorrows of daily life (*Stanza 3*). Poesy shall bear him away ; he finds himself transported to the woodland world (*Stanza 4*). He finds the beauty of the early summer (*Stanza 5*). The intolerable power of pure beauty makes him long for death (*Stanza 6*). With his own mortality he contrasts the immortality of the bird (*Stanza 7*). With the word 'forlorn' the closing stanza calls up a train of other associations which wake him from his dream ; he cannot escape as he has pretended.

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The song of the Nightingale fades away in the distance and the poet returns, half-dazed, to real life.

The Subject-matter of the Poem

Remarking on the subject-matter of this poem, *Sidney Colvin* says, "It is not the particular Nightingale had heard singing in the Hampstead garden that he in this poem invokes, but a type of the race imagined as singing in some far-off scene of woodland mystery and beauty. Thither he tried to follow her : (a) first by the aid of spell of some southern vintage—a spell which he makes us realize in lines redolent of the southern richness and joy. (b) Then follows a contrasted vision of all his own and mankind's tribulations which he will leave behind him. Nay, he needs not the aid of Bacchus, Poetry alone shall transport him. For a moment he mistrusts her power, but the next moment finds himself where he would be listening to the imagined song in the imagined woodland and divining in the darkness by that gift whereby his mind is a match for nature, all the secrets of the season and the night. In this joy he remembers how often thought of death has seemed welcome to him, and thinks the death would be more welcome now than ever. The Nightingale would not cease her song—and here by a breach of logic which is also. I think, a flaw in the poetry, he contrasts the transitoriness of human life, meaning the life of the individual, with the permanence of the song bird's life, meaning the life of the type. This last thought leads him off into the ages whence he brings back those memorable touches of far-off Bible and legendry romance in the stanza closing with the words.....'in faery lands forlorn' and then catching up his own last word 'forlorn' with an abrupt change of mood and meaning, he returns to daily consciousness, and with the fading away of his forest dream the poem closes."

The Ode is undoubtedly the masterpiece of Keats. It will help us in following Keats's logic in the poem if the bird Nightingale is not taken as a mere song-bird, but as the voice of that perfect and secure happiness, beauty and love for which the unhappy young poet longed and which always appeared to be beyond his grasp.

Passionately Human and Personal

The Ode to Nightingale is the most passionately human and personal of all the great odes. It was written soon after the tragic death of his beloved, brother Tom. The poet was already in the clutches of that terrible disease ; he was also feeling keenly pangs of his intense, but hopeless passion for Fanny Brawne, and his financial difficulties were aggravated by the brutal attacks on his poetry. Hence an undercurrent of melancholy runs through the ode. The following lines are manifestly autobiographical :

> The weariness, the fever and the fret
> Here, where men sit and hear each other groan :
> Where Palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
> Where youth grows pale, and spectre thin and dies.

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The subjectivity of the poem makes it the finest expression of the poet's heart. This lyric expression is achieved as David Perking says "by focussing on a particular subject and staying with it." The poem vibrates with personal anguish but as *Middleton Murry* tells us it is not a poem of despair : "its marvel is that it holds suspended, in a moment of absolute beauty, the tension between Time and Eternity, between Joy and Sorrow, between Mortality and Immortality, between Lif and Death."

A Lovely Piece of Romantic Poetry

The poem is a lovely piece of romantic poetry. The atmosphere of hushed silence at midnight and the poet listening in this dark corner in the garden—to the thrilling voice of the bird which makes one suddenly aware of the sorrow of human condition and beauty that pases—the mysterious, almost supernatural ethereal atmosphere of the poem prove the poet as characteristically romantic. The poet like a wanderer in quest of happiness escapes from reality to encounter reality again at the end of the poem. The poet comes back from where he started with a question though sadder but wiser. In a way this escape from reality helped him to understand reality with a deeper insight into it.

Most Richly Representative of all Keats's Poems

"*Ode to a Nightingale* has a special interest as the most richly representative of all Keats's poems. There is its matchless evocation of that spring and early summer season which constitutes such a large part of the Keatsian world and there is its exceptional degree of distillation, of concentrated recollection, that is to say of images and turns of expression, sensation, sentiments, ideas and moods, while all the odes together may be considered as climax of all the poetry that he has left us. *The Ode to a Nightingale* is his most intense *cride coeur*—the one that vibrates directly and plaintively with that personal anguish that had so much to do with the creation of this part of the work. It is also for all his links with the actuality, the ode in which his yearning dreams of release from the misery of the human lot is the most generalised and the closest to what had always been a dominant in his writing—of easy soaring flights into remote lovely worlds of poesy and Fancy." (*E. C. Pettet*).

Sensuousness

The Ode is an epitome of all the characteristic qualities of Keats's poetry. It is richly sensuous. In the opening stanza. the poet enjoys the sensation of absolute lethargy, that mood of effeminacy when there is total relaxation of the mood and the body. In the second stanza, he enjoys the sensation of coolness. Then follows a technicolour picture, richly voluptuous and suggestive :

> Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
> With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
> And purple-stained mouth,

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Here is presenl Keats's Hellenic quality. Four out of the five senes are satisfied by the following passage :

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess, each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket and the fruit-tree wild
....
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Picturesqueness

Keats's poetry is famous for being poetical and pictorial. In this ode beautiful word-pictures follow each other in succession. We have already noted the voluptuous pictures of the bubbles dancing and winking, like some dancing girl. This picture is followed by the delightful image of the Moon personfied as a queen :

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays.

Many of the word-pictures are enclosed within single words :
"Leaden-eyed despair" ; "purple-stained mouth."

Hellenism

The poem exploits the Greek myth of Philomela and Procene. Keats's Hellenism is brought out by such references to Greek mythology as "light-winged Dryad of the trees", "Flora", "Blushful Hippocrene," Baccuhus and his pards."

Other Features

The imagery of the poem is sensuous. The diction is sweet and sonorous. The stanza form used in the poem is a beautiful invention with its intricate rhyme-plan. It is of ten lines with the following rhyme-arrangement :

ab ab cde cde.

All the lines excepting one are of ten syllables and the measure is iambic. The eighth line is short consisting of six syllables. This short line comes 'just at the moment when variety is needed to prevent continued delight passing monotony' (Lamborn). The last line of the second stanza is an Alexandrine or twelve-syllabled line this line 'with its lingering motive has ample reason to be longer than any other in the poem.' —(*Forman*).

Conclusion

On account of the qualities and characteristics mentioned above *Sidney Colvin* regards it as one "among the variest glories of English poetry." *Robert Bridges* writes : "I cannot name an English poem of the same length which contains so much beauty as this Ode." *Middleton Murry* says, "for sheer love-liness this poem is unsurpassed in the English language." However, there are some, like *W. H. Rossetti* who are critical of this great Ode. Among the faults he points

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out are : (1) It is too heavily overloaded with Greek mythology, and so the readers get surfieted. (2) Certain of the phrases are stilted, trivial and repulsive, *e.g.*, "with beaded bubbles winking at the top." (3) There is logical solecism in the fact that human life is spoken of as transient and the nightingale is called immortal. "But this antithesis", says the learned critic, "cannot stand the test of a moment's reflection. Man, as a race, is as deathless, as superior to the tread of hungry generations, as is the nightingale as a race, while the nightingale as an individual bird has a life not less fleeting, still more fleeting, than a man as an individual.

CRITICAL OPINIONS ON 'THE ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE'

1. Harold Bloom

"*The Ode to a Nightingale* expresses a yearning to be translated to a better and more blissful world. So this Nightingale is a theological rather than an ornithological one and the poet is typically romantic in that use of nature."

2. David Perkins

"Although the *Ode to a Nightingale* ranges more widely than the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', the poem can also be regarded as the exploration or testing out of a symbol, and compared with the Urn as a symbol, the Nightingale would seem to have both limitations and advantages.....the Nightingale, however, has a living identity and sings to the senses, thus allowing a massive symathetic response. The liability is that unlike the Urn, the song of the Nightingale does not suggest something potentially eternal. It is true that in his ardor, the poet momentarily makes it immortal but he does so at that cost destroying any sympathetic union with it, and, in the logic of the poem, virtually compels it to fly away. Hence the same symapthetic grip that makes the experience vivid to the point that one would wish to prolong it, also forces the recognition that it must be shortlived."

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

In the early months of 1819, Keats was living with his friend Charles Armitage Brown at Hampstead (Wentworth Palace). A few months earlier, his brother Tom had died. He himself was far from well. His other brother George had recently left for America in search of fortune with his wife, and the Reviewers had savagely attacked his *Endymion.* We can detect in this ode "signs of that drooping of the vital powers which was the overshadowing of the wings of Death."—(*Downer.*) A few weeks earlier he had fallen in love with Miss Fanny Browne. This love, unfortunately, did not bring him happiness, but added to his anxiety.

In April, a nightingle had made its nest near Brown's house. "One morning during this period, when his mind was filled with the mingled feelings of love and sorrow, of hope and fear, of baffled ambition and high courage, of grief at his losses and forebodings for his

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physical powers, 'he took his chair from the breakfast table' so writes Brown, 'to the grass-plot under a plum where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On enquiry I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetical feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible, and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his '*Ode to a Nightingale.*' Not long afterwards, while walking with his friend Haydon in the Kilburn meadows, he recited this Ode, in his 'low tremulous under-tone' and 'with thrilling effect."—(*Downer*).

Metre—The stanza form is a beautiful invention with its intricate rhyme-plan. It is of ten lines with the following rhyme arrangement.

a b a b c d e c d e.

All the lines excepting one are of ten syllables and the measure is iambic. The eighth line is short consisting of six syllables. This short line comes 'just at the moment when variety is needed to prevent continued delight passing monotony.'—(*Lamborn*). The last line of the second stanza-

"And with thee fade away into the forest dim"

is an Alexandrine or twelve-syllabled line and this line 'with its lingering motive has ample reason to be longer than any other in the poem.'—(*Forman*).

Stanza I. The nightingale's music exercises the hypnotic influence of a drug and he loses consciousness of his surroundings.

aches, not in pain but through excess of joy.

sense, senses. All his senses are benumbed.

hemlock, not introduced by Keats as a poison 'With which the unjust Athenians made to die Wise Socrates'—(*Spenser*) but at a narcotic.

dull opiate, the opiate is not dull but it dulls or numbs the senses and deadens pain. It is an example of Transferred Epithet or Hypallage.

drains, dregs.

Lethe-wards, Lethe is one of the four rivers of Hades or hell. It is the river of forgetfulness.

'Lethe the river of oblivion rules
Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks,
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.'
(Milton, *Paradise Lost* II)

The song of the nightingale makes him oblivious of the present.

That thou, the thought that thou

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Dryad, wood-nymph.

melodious plot, a very felicitious and bold expression indicating the dark foliage of the tree, which hides the nightingale and resounds with its music.

beechen, adjective from beech.

green, leaves or foliage.

shadows numberless, infinite number of patches of light and shade caused by light passing through the dense foliage of the beech tree.

summer, the song is full of assertion, promise and cheerful expectancy.

full-throated ease, its throat is distended as though with effort it is 'pouring forth its soul abroad ; 'yet, in reality, with that restfulness and absence of strain which ever accompany the perfection of art.'—(*Downer*). Incidentally Keats here indicates the essential qualities of truly great art.

Stanza II. The song of the nightingale has acted as an opiate which has obliterated the past. The aid of the wine is sought so as to call up a beautiful present. The poet seeks complete absorption in the spirit of the nightingale. "Keenly alive to the contrast of its happy lot with his own sad feelings, he longs to share the bird's joys.'—(*Downer*). How is that to be done ? Shall he try wine as a means of escape from the pain of his own thoughts and of the world ?

vintage, wine produced from grapes.

Tasting of Flora, the wine brings up romantic associations with its place of origin, the land of troubadours.

Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers. *Cf.*
'Roses and pink and violents to adorn,
The shrines of Flora in her early May."—(*Keats*).

country green, the village common where in Maytime festivities the whole village would gather, sing and dance.

Provencal song, the songs of the troubadours or minstrels of Provence, the southern portion of France along the Mediterranean, which was a wine-growing province.

sun-burnt mirth, the sun being quite strong in southern France or northern Itlay, the grape-gatherers are sun-burnt. 'The *people* are not mentioned at all, yet this phrase conjures up a picture of merry, laughing sun-burnt peasants, as surely as could a long and elaborate description'—(*Robertson*).

warm South, enliving wine of southern Europe.

blushful, suggests redness and purity both. It is only the pure who can blush.

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Hippocrene, a fountain, sacred to the Muses on Mt. Helicon in Boeotia. Pegasus in Greek mythology is a winged horse which sprang from the blood of Medusa when Perseus cut off her head and the fountain Hippocrene was said to have been produced by the stamp of the hoof of Pegasus, the symbol of poetic inspiration. The fountain was guarded by the nine Muses and was thus the stream of poetry on earth. Wine here is regarded as the veritable source of poetic inspiration.

beaded, beadlike, globular.

winking at the brim, the bubbles break and sparkle as they burst on arriving at the brim of the beaker.

purple-stained mouth, this generally taken to mean the mouth of the beaker stained with wine. But Keats possibly meant it is a Bacchic expression referring to the growing exhilaration of the drinker.

unseen, used proleptically, *i. e.*, so as to be unseen.

And with.....dim, 'the end to be attained (with the help of wine) is forgetfulness of the world and identification with the blessed bird in its haunts. The long Alexandrine at the end of the stanza, the only one in the poem, seems designed to portray the lengthening out or gradual melting away, of the man into the midnight forest.'—(Downer). Some editors omit 'away' to make the line decasyllabic and spoil the beauty in the line.

forest dim, forest of dim moonlight.

Stanza III. 'A contrasted vision of all his own and mankind's tribulation which he will leave behind him.'—(Colvin). The miseries of life are generalised, 'but the mood enshrined in the poetic strains is illuminated by the actual sorrows of the poet himself.'—(Downer).

fade, that I might fade.

dissolve, melt into air.

weariness, *cf*, 'it is a tale told by an idiot.'

—(*Macbeth*, V, v)

the fever, and the fret, *cf*, Milton's *Comus* :

'Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being."

The phrase is also reminiscent of

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

—(*Macbeth*, III, ii)

The multitudinous and the tumultuous passions of the human breast make life a perpetual fever. The fret means the many vexations or annoyances of life.

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Hear.....other groan, the line "depicts supreme misery. It is as though a man, broken with the weight of his own woes, should turn to other men for relief, and instead of comfort, should only hear their sad complaints."

—(Downer).

palsy, paralysis or general weakness and helplessness of old age.

shakes, age and disease tremble as it were on the verge of tomb.

a few sad.....hairs, a picturesque description of old age with its characteristic baldness and greying of hair.

where youth.....dies, Keats wrote this Ode soon after the death of his brother Tom, whom he had loved devotedly and nursed to the end.

leaden-eyed, literally with heavy or downcast eyes. *Cf.* the description of the eyes of Melancholy in Milton's *Il Penseroso,*

"till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast,"

and Grany has,

"Leaden eye that loves the ground"

in his *Ode to Adversity.*

Where beauty.....to-morrow, "the last two lines are perfect. 'Lustrous eyes' is full of beauty ; so is the music of the whole ; and the solitary instance of a faminine ending (sorrow and morrow) in the poem lend itself well to the pathos of the stanza."—(Downer).

Beauty on earth is transient, so also is Love engendered by it. Contrast the permanence of Love and Beauty in art.

"She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair."

—(*Ode on a Grecian Urn*).

Stanza IV. He does not need the aid of Bacchus. Poetry will transport him instead.

Away ! Away !, wine is not potent enough.

'It is thought of but rejected, as a means of union with the nightingale.'—(Downer).

charioted, 'chariot' as a verb is Miltonic, *Cf.*

"As in a fiery column charioting
His Godlike presence"—(*Samson Agonistes*).

Not charioted.....pards, 'not under the influence of wine.' The chariot of Bacchus, god of wine, was drawn by tigers or lynxes. Titian's portrait of Bacchus and Ariadne may have influenced the line.

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viewless wings, invisible wings.

Though.....retards, for a moment he mistrusts the power of poetry, as human nature is weak and may be unequal to lofty poetic flight.

perplexes, confuses.

retards, checks the poetic flight.

Already with thee, the next momet he is with the nightingale, *cf.*

'How fleet is a glance of the mind !
Compared with the speed of its flight,
The tempest itself lags behind,
And the swift-winged arrows of light."

—(Cowper).

tender, the night is not far advanced.

haply, by hap or chance and of course it was a good chance.

Queen-Moon, the moon is the undisputed monarch of the nocturnal sky, the stars being the fays or faeries in attendance. The scene is obviously imagined ; as we know the Ode was composed in the morning.

here, on the tree, the 'melodious plot of beachen green,' where the poet is with the nightingale.

Save, excepting.

with the breezes blown, the dense foliage is stirred by the breeze and moonlight streams through the openings or interstices of the foliage. The gloom is due to the density of the green foliage in spring time and that is occasionally dissipated by the sudden penetration of lights 'blown in.' Moss grows on the trunks of the trees in unfrequented places and makes paths on which sometimes moonlight is reflected.

Cf. To the Skylark.

"Leave to the nightingale her shady wood."

—(Wordsworth).

Stanza V. The beauty of the romantic forest into which the spirit of the poet fades.

cannot see, owing to 'verdurous glooms.'

Soft, involves the sense of touch.

incense, scented blossoms.

Nor what.....boughs, 'The dark, warm, sweet atmosphere seems to enfold us. It would be hard to find a more fragrant passage.'—(Robertson).

embalmed, scented.

guess, divine with poetic imagination which is more potent than all senses.

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each sweet, each sweet plant or blossom.

seasonable, 'the month in its due season, a rare use of the world.' —(Downer).

endows, adorns, bedecks.

fruit tree, involves the sense of taste.

pastoral, may mean (*i*) mentioned in idyllic poetry or (*ii*) growing in fields.

Fast fading, the violets blooming in March and April will be fading fast in May.

leaves, the leaves grow thick and large in May and hide the violets from view.

eldest child, the first flower that blooms in May.

coming, about to bloom.

full of dewy wine, the dew in the flowers becomes wine for the flies to sip, or the musk-rose is a cup fit for the lips of fairies like Oberon and Titania.

The murmurous.....eves, a perfect example of Onomatopoeia, a line the sound of which echoes the sense. The repetiton of 's' imitates the sibilant hum of the flies which pleases the ears. 'It is a piece of word-music ; a line of beauty and delight. Four of the five senses are summoned in this stanza—and Fancy (poetical imagination).'—(Downer). The four senses are smell, touch, hearing and taste.

Stanza VI. The poet is filled with ecstatic delight by the song of the nightingale and would wish to die before pain comes back.

Darkling, a Miltonic word in the dark, *cf.*

"As the wakeful bird sings darkling."

easeful, death would mean perfect ease and cessation of earthly troubles.

called him soft names, 'invoked him tenderly.'

mused rhyme, verses meditated, not actually composed.

more than ever, because his senses are gratified (the sense of hearing and sight) and he is also happy as his imagination has been stimulated by the song.

rich, a luxurious experience.

To cease.....ecstasy, !, 'All this is sensuous in the highest degree, and at the same time sentimental and reflective.' —(Downer). *Cf. Othello,* II, *i*

"It were now to die,
'Twere now to be most happy ; for I fear,
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate."

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still, continually.

I have, I would have.

high, exalted.

requiem, a chant or song or repose for the soul of the dead. Cf. '*Requiem aeternam dona eis, domine*, Give them eternal rest, O Lord.'

a sod, as deaf as a sod.

Stanza VII. The immortality of nightingale leads him back to the biblical past and the past of legendary romance.

wast not born, the song of the bird is much too beautiful and the bird cannot die.

immortal Bird !, insensibly the poet passes to the permanence of the nightingale as a species and contrasts that with the mortality of the poet. There is a breach of logic or the analogy is oblique, which, however, inspires the most moving stanza of the Ode.

hungry generation.....down, the line is 'Dantesque in its 'weird vigour,' and illustrates the poet's wonderful power of condensation. The nightingale is not subject to the ruthless struggle for existence as human beings are. 'The older generations must pass away before the young can possess and enjoy the world.

Passing night, to night.

emperor and clown, the identical song must have gratified the ears of a Ceasar or a Charlemagne, the husbandman or the peasant of the countryside. Clown does not suggest buffonery but the unrefined ears of the rural folk.

self-same, identical.

found a path Through, penetrated.

sad heart of Ruth, 'or who knows whether, in still more remote days, Ruth the young Moabitish widow, even in the very gush of her blinding tears, may not have been cheered by the penetrating and sympathetic notes ?''—(Downer). Ruth is from Moab. Though young, she left Moab and followed her mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem, the home of her husband's kinsmen—'how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come upto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.'—(Ruth II, 11).

alien corn, carnfield of her husband's kinsman, Boaz, in Bethlehem, which was a foreign country to Ruth. While gleaning corn in the field of Boaz, as she felt homesick, she was distracted by the music of the nightingale.

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The same that... ...forlorn, superb lines embodying the quintessence of mediaeval romance with its diablerie, its chivalric love and sacrifice and its homesickness for the unknown and thus summing up both Sir Walter Scott and Coleridge. 'We read the words and seem to behold in high romance, the shadowy enchanter's castle in a kingdom by the sea, the sea, the lonely tower of which encloses an imprisoned princess, held in duress : and when the rich full note of the nightingale breaks upon her captive ear, she opens her window to listen and to look out over the wild waves for the ship that shall bring the knight of her deliverance'.—(Downer).

magic casements, windows which would open and shut of their own accord by magic. *Cf.* Keats's *Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds,*

"You know the Enchanted Castle, it doath stand
Upon a rock, on the border of a Lake,
... ...
... ...
The doors all look as if they op'd themselves,
The windows as if latched by Fays and Elves.

perilous, 'None but the braves deserves the fair.'
Sacrifice is the essence of mediaeval chivalry. *Cf.* Richard Lovelace :

To Lucasta on going to the Wars,

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

The love will have to defy the tumultuous waves of the dangerous seas in order to liberate and win the love of the princess held in duress.

faery lands forlorn, lands alluring but uncertain and also desolate. Both faery and forlorn deepen the element of peril in the quest of love. Note the effect of alliteration.

Stanza VIII. The journey back to daily consciousness.

Forlorn, the word in the last stanza is 'full of pathetic beauty,' here 'it is a cry of pain.' The sudden change of mood is effected by the abrupt change of meaning of the word 'forlorn'. He feels like one lost as he is unattended by the dream.

like a bell, the bell warns that the poetic dream cannot last for ever.

sole self, "the journey homeward to habitual self," (*Endymion, II*) when he has to face the stern realities of life.

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fancy, imagination.

elf, spirit, the sweet deception does not last for ever. 'Fain would he sleep and dream again ; but it may not be''—(Downer).

Adieu ! adieu !, 'The word seems to echo the very nightingale's trill as it recedes further from his sense'.—(Downer).

plaintive anthem, tender and passionate song with which it was 'pouring forth' its 'soul abroad.'

a vision, a vision however divine and a dream howsoever pleasant does not last for ever. And that is the pity of it.

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2

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

I

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme :
What leaf-fring'd legent haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady ?
What men or gods are these ? What maidens loth ?
What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?
What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ?

II

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on :
Nor to the sensual ear, but more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
Bold Lover, never, never, canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goa—yet, do not grieve ;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

III

Ah, happy, happy bought ! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu ;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new ;
More happy love ! more happy, happy love !
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting and for ever young ;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

IV

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
To what green alter, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?
What little town by river or sea-shore,

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Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn ?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

V

O Attic shape ! Fair attitude ! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed ;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a frind to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth truth beauty",—That is all
Yet know on earth, and all ye need to know.

INTRODUCTION

The Ode is the complete expression of the idea which was in Keat's mind when he wrote, "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever". The Ode is composed of several elements, all of which had long been pondered over by the poet. His love of Greek art, his sense of the nearness of pain and pleasure, of the conrast between the stormy nature of the passion, and the severity of the ideal, of the charm of the old Pagan worship—all are blended here. By intense meditation a thing of beauty, Keats rises to the inspired affimation of the last two lines.

The inspiration for the Ode was partly derived from a marble urn belonging to Lord Holland, and still preserved at Holland House. But it is also certain that Keats is thinking of Greek sculpture in general, as revealed to him by the famous Elgin marbles.

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. The poet's imagination is set at work on seeing the Grecian urn. The urn is wedded to quietness, the quietness of art, but still it tells the tale of Greek life in the past through the pictures carved on it. The poet is keen to known whether it depicts the life of the vale of Tempe or that of the dales of Arcady, and whether the figures carved on it are men or gods. Who are the young lovers who are the maiden that are being pursued ? Why are they trying to escape their lovers ? What do the pipes and timbrels signify ?

Stanza 2. Music which we hear by our bodily ears is, no doubt, sweet, but the music which is heard only through the imagination is sweeter still, because it is permanent, and because it appeals directly to the soul The poet, therefore, asks the musicians carved on the Greek urn to continue their delightful music and thus fill his soul with their silent melody. Then he turns to the picture of the youth

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playing on the pipe under the green, shady trees. He will never cease playing, and the trees under which he sings will never shed their leaves. He will ever enjoy the permanence of art. Similarly, the lover on the urn trying to kiss his beloved, can never actually kiss her, though he seems very near to kissing her. But he need not be unhappy. He should console himself with the thought his beloved will ever retain her beauty, and he will always love her. Art has conferred immortality on his love and her beauty.

Stanza 3. In this stanza the poet dwells more firmly on the permanence of art. The green trees carved on the urn will never shed their leaves, and will thus enjoy permanent spring. The musician will never get tired ; he will play on for ever and ever, and his song will ever remain new and fresh. The lover is happy, for his love will never change. It will ever remain young and passionate. It will always be a source of joy for him, for every moment he will be expecting to kiss his beloved. His love will ever remain calm and elevated, quite different from human love which brings sorrow and suffering in its train.

Stanza 4. One of the pictures carved on the urn was that of a lover pursuing his beloved. There is another picture also that of a number of people going to make sacrifice. A priest is seen leading a heifer to the sacrifice on some green altar. The heifer is looking up and lowing to the sky. Her soft sides are decorated with flowers. There are a large number of people following the priest, and the poet imagines that the town, out of which they have come, must be practically empty. The poet will like to know if the town is situated by a river or on the sea-shore, or is it built on a hill-top with a fort in its midst. However, this much is certain ; the town will ever remain silent and its streets, empty. None of the citizens will ever return to explain why the town is empty. Art has caught a moment in the life of these people and made it immortal.

Stanza 5. The poet addresses the Grecian urn embroidered all over with pictures of men and women, of forest trees and trodden weeds, and says that it baffles and perplexes the human mind as does eternity itself. It is as mysterious and unknowable as eternity. When the present generation has died out, the urn will live in the midst of the future generations and try to lessen their suffering by its friendly message. It will tell them that Beauty and Truth are indentical, and an understanding of this principle alone is sufficient for man during his earthly existence.

Expl. *Beauty is truth.....need to know.*

Many editors print the first phrase in inverted commas, "Beauty is truth, truth beaty," and leave the rest of the couplet as Keat's personal feeling. This reading is that of the first edition, and has, therefore, strong claims. In the *Mss.* However, there are no inverted commas and in another edition, usually trustworthy, the punctuation is that reproduced in the present edition.

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"In this conflict of evidence, the text that gives the best sense has been adopted ; it seems more natural to assigne the whole couplet to the urn's voice than to imagine that Keats himself suddenly, and for the first time in *the Ode*, turns to address the reader."

The lines constitute the message of Keats. They have been explained in different ways by different critics. But the general drift seems to be that any beauty which is not truthful, and any truth which is not beautiful, are of no practical importance to mankind. Any such separation of Beauty and Truth is not possible, for to the human mind Beauty and Truth are the same thing. A work of art is beautiful because it expresses the truth within the soul of the artist ; the Sun the Moon, etc , are beautiful, for they express the glory of God, the Truth at the heart of the universe. Even the picture of an ugly object, say a snake or a lizard, is beautiful because it reproduces that ugly object truthfully. This is the message of the urn to humanity, and it is this message that Keats recommends to his fellow-men. If they understand this message of the urn, then they need not bother for any other knowledge. For their earthly existence this much of knowledge is sufficient.

This was also the thought of the Greek Philosopher, Plato. It should create no difficulty for Indian students who know the well-known teachinig, "*Shivam, Sundrum*", etc.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The Occasion of the Poem

The Ode on a Grecian Urn was written in the spring of 1819. It could not have been inspired by any single urn, because no known urn of antiquity portrays both a Bacchanalian procession *i.e.* a scene of dancing, singing and merry-making, and a pastoral sacrifice. Keats must have imagined the urn he describes, by a mental combination of subjects derived from different urns. *Weekes* suggests that the inspiration for this ode must have been partly derived from a marble urn belonging to Lord Holland and still preserved at his residence. This urn has carved on it the scene of a pastoral sacrifice in outline ; and, of course, no subject is commoner in Greek sculputre than a Bacchanalian procession. Keats combines both these scenes on the imaginary urn described by him in the ode.

The poem was also recited by Keats in course of a walk with Haydon through the kilburn Meadows "in a deep and thrilling chant." It was published in January 1820.

Sources of the Poem

The poem developed from many sources. The first was the poet's vision of a Greek vase having some figures engraved on it. This urn said to be Lord Holland's urn represents the scene of a sacrifice An altar bearing fruit is carved in the midst. Nearby stands a priest, and above is a figure playing on a pipe. Other details recalling Keats's

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conception, are two trees, and a bull that is brought to be slain. But the poem was a result of Keats's very long contemplation from the time when he wrote : "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." His love of Greek art, his sense of the nearness of pain and pleasure, of the contrast between the stormy nature of the passions, and the severity of the ideal, of the charm of the old Pagan worship—all are blended here. By intense meditation on a thing of beauty, Keats rises to the inspired affirmation of the last two lines.

The Subject and Theme of the Poem

The theme of the ode, of course, is the human and the mutable on the one hand, the immortal and essential on the other. At first sight Keats's theme in the *Ode to a Nightingale* and on *the Grecian Urn* cannot be distinguished. The theme in both is the belief that whereas the breif experience of beauty is fleeting, the embodiment of the same experience in art, marble or song is a source of joy and it never perishes. Thus this ode also like his other odes is a hymn of triumph to some extent.

The solace of romance is exchanged for the solace of art in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn.* Human life and happiness may be brief yet art may enshrine them with an ideal beauty that outlives the years. The figures and all they symbolised are gone, but art has given them a lasting durability and so links the ages together. The Grecian Urn is the happiest stroke of invention, the sudden and surprising detachment of beauty from the flow of time and change. In the words of Sidney Colvin, the main theme of the poem is the vital difference between life, which pays for its unique prerogative of reality by satiety and decay, and art, which is forfeiting reality, gains in exchange permanence of beauty, and the power to charm by imagined experience, even richer than the real."

Spiritual Sublimation

From the drowsed intoxication of the senses the poet rises to a glorious clean-eyed apprehension of the spiritual eternity which art, with its unheard melodies, affords. The three consummate central stanzas have themselves the impassioned serenity of great sculpture. Only less noble are the splendid imagery of the opening, and the immortal paradox of the close.

Development of thought

Keats addresses the Urn : What is the legend which is carved on its sides ? He passes to direct consideration of the sculptured legend : the flute players, the youth singing under trees, the lovers about to kiss. (*Stanza 1*)

The craven life—the silent music of the marble pipes, the love that never reaches fruition—all this life of imagery and imagination is more real and more enviable than the human life of audible melody and tangible embraces. The fruition of human love never brings real happiness. (*Stanza 2*)

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What the urn loses in reality, it gains in permanence. The lovers are for ever young on the Urn. (*Stanza 3*)

Hitherto Keats has confined himself to the actual figures on the Urn. In this stanza he not only animates the marble, but goes beyond it to create a whole landscape of river and seashore and city in which the cavern figures can live and move. There is a perfect picture of a sacrificial holiday. There is a tinge of sorrow because the streets for ever will silent be. The inhabitants of the little town can never return to tell "why thou art desolate." (*Stanza 4*)

Then Keats draws the moral of the Urn, which is also the moral of his life's work, that is, the generations of men pass and die, but Beauty and Truth—not two things, nor even twin things, but one and the same thing seen from different aspects—are permanent for ever. In the form of art they live perennially.

Substance of the Poem and Its Interpretation

The poem is remarkable for two things—(1) it is the poet's maturest, almost final word, on his vision of Hellas (Greek life, culture and art); and (2) it has been interpreted in quite different way and has given rise to endless controversy. Robert Bridges criticises the ode as having only one static idea. He finds no development of thought in it and says, "the poem is unprogressive, monotonous, and scattered, the attention being called to fresh details without result." But according to C. M. Bowra, the poem has a beginning, a middle and an end. In the first stanza we have the introduction, in the second, third and fourth, we get the exposition of the main theme, and in the fifth, the conclusion.

The Ode opens with an invocation, and the urn is referred to as the "unravished bride of quietness." Thus the Urn is a symbol of calm repose and timelessness. The two opening lines together constitute one of those rich passages which have been described by Rossetti as the "pillars of Hercules of the human language." Then follows a string of questions, questions which are at the same time pictures :

> What men or gods are these ? What midens loth ?
> What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?

The poet then proceeds to answer the questions in the second and third stanza and in this way the main subject of the poem, that is, the legend carved on the vase, is described. It is the scene of a Bacchanalian procession consisting of the flute players, that youth singing under the trees, and the lover about to kiss. The scene makes the poor think t the carven life—the silent music of the marble pipes, the unuttered song, the bold lover on the point of kissing, the beautiful maiden—all this imagined life is more real than the human life of audible melody and physical embraces. The lover carved on the urn is happier, for he may not enjoy the fruition of love, but he would always love, and his beloved would retain her beauty for ever :

> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

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Then in a higher philosophical conception the poet expresses :

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter, therefore, ye soft pipes, play on,
Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.

Thus the poet prefers spiritual enjoyment to the sensual enjoyment.

In the fourth stanza there is another scene on the Urn which shows a procession which is going to sacrifice a calf. It is headed by a priest. Keats here is again catching his poise and asks his mysterious priest about the procession. Why is the animal dressed with garlands ? Why does the animal cry ? The poet in contrast to himself in the preceding stanza, has kept a distance and "designed a succession of effects." The poet's mind moves backward to the possible city from which the priest, the heifer, and the people going out to the sacrifice, have come :

What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn ?

In the answering lines Keats gives a picture of the town which the poeple in the procession have vacated. The town is painted as situated near the river at the foot of a hill and on the hill top there is a fortress. The town is empty. The town, Keats says, will always remain desolate and no one will ever tell its tale.

In the last stanza we are told that the Urn is a beautiful object in Greek art. Its surface is carved with many beautiful objects. There are pictures of men and women on that. It includes the carved patterns of wild branches and the grass which is walked over by three revellers. Keats mentions the Urn again as a silent form and sustains the object's former association in the second line of the poem. It is in this last stanza that the poet purports to convey to his readers that it is imagination alone that can enable us to see into the life of things; intellect can lead us nowhere. The works of art, like the urn, awaken our imagination and thus seduce us from thought. They are as remote and eternal as eternity itself. They lie outside the scope of ordinary thought, as well as outside ordinary emotions. Hence the urn is referred to as "cold pastoral" which in a "silent form, dost tease us out of thought as doth eternity." And then in the concluding lines the poet gives his message :

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

These concluding, famous lines have given rise to an endless discussion and a variety of interpretations. For *Robert Bridges* they redeem a poor poem : for *Quiller-Couch.* they are an uneducated conclusion, and for *T. S. Eliot*, they are "a serious blemish on a beautiful poem." *Prof. Garrod* takes "Truth" to mean "reality" and rightly explains the lines thus :

"There is nothing real but the beautiful, and nothing beautiful but the real."

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Prof C. M. Bowra narrows the application of the message by saying that it should not be taken to mean a complete philosophy of life but a theory of art, "a doctrine intended to explain Keats's own creative experience." The lines, according to *C. M. Bowra*, tell us "what great art means to those who create it, while they create it, and so long as this doctrine is not applied beyond its proper confines, it is not only clear but true." The conclusion, according to the Hindu way, hints at *satyam, shivam and sundaram.*

Symbols and Images

Earl Wasserman traces the poem wholly as a drama of the symbols. The images are shown developing from the beginning to the end. The very title "On Grecian Urn" shows that it is a commentary on the object seen through artistic sensibility. Keats keeping himself away from the Urn is observing the drama going on the Urn. But at the same time the poet is experiencing the drama himself.

The Urn is symbolic of eternity and timelessness. It is a piece of art. All arts—poetry, music and painting—can be appreciated not by thought or intellect but by emotion or imagination. To Keats truth is beauty and beauty truth. If the beauty of art is searched to the very depths of speculation, truth will be found there. "Saddened by the mutability of natural beauty, Keats sought consolation in the more permanent beauty of Art" (*Finny, The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*).

Conclusion

In the words of C. M. Bowra, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* "moves from eager curiosity to delighted amazement, exalted rapture and devout solemnity ; it closes on a note akin to revelation, paradoxical clarity.....the poem has more than a direct line of development. It has its contrasts of height and depth and the richness which these add to it."

CRITICAL OPINIONS

1. John Holloway

"In 'On a Grecian Urn' he is describing as he sees it in others what in the former poem (*Nightingale*) he experienced and expressed for himself. The experience is not of course identical but the type is unchanged. Keats is now the recorder, in the other poems he was the protagonist."

2. H. W. Garrod

"The theme of what has gone before (in the first four stanzas) is the arrest of beauty, the fixity given by art to forms which in life are fluid and impermanent and the appeal of relation of beauty to truth or to thought. Nothing has prepared the translation to this—The figures of the Urn become for Keats suddenly a "Cold Pastoral"—Cold the character of everything that is enduring...The second half of the stanza—of which the first, marring seriously, as I think, the

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effect of all that has preceded, has called in question the appeal of art ...Down to the end of the fourth stanza, there is a very perfect development of the governing idea—the supremacy of art over Nature because of its unchanging expression of perfection."

3. Earl Wasserman

"The intention of the poem, therefore, must be to hold up art as the source of the highest form of wisdom. It is in this more embracing sense...that the Urn has become in the final stanza silent form which although silent paradoxically speaks to man. The very bourne of heaven does not noisily cry out to man its existence ; knowledge of its nature is for ever available, but man can gain it only by self-annihilating entrance into the bourne itself."

4. Kenneth Muir

"The Ode on a Grecian Urn possesses the beauty, the significance and the externality of art and this in the third stanza explicitly and throughout the poem implicitly is contrasted with the transitoriness, the meaninglessness and the unpoetic nature of actual life. The unwearied melodist—"For ever piping songs for ever new"—the Urn is proclaiming that there is not merely a close relationship but an actual identity between beauty and truth. Art is invaded by human suffering."

5. Allan Rodway

"The main conflict is now that of Truth and Beauty not magic and fact. Such knowledge results in wistfulness, turning to affirmation perhaps a little too aggressively at the end but mostly by implication so through the poem is not ironic it lives in the neighbourhood of Irony. The paradoxes too of soundless sound, timeless time, stationary growth and so forth—are allied to wit though not witty. Nevertheless much of the flavour of the poem is due to sweetness of what is said combined with the acridness of what is implied the unarcadian world where love fades and beauty mortal and often far from true. The limitation and unrealism of the eternal are conceded in the last lines of the second stanza. It follows that beauty is that such discussed conclusion of the poem, must be akin to that in "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" or what the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth—the essence of the wished for world...The final lines assert a reconciliation between these worlds but it carries conviction only in so far as art is the answer. As a rule for life, it wont do. Indeed the note of affirmation in the last line seems to indicate a wish that this were all ye know on earth and all ye need to know, the real belief having been already given in the phrase "a friend to Man's work of art is an impersonal beauty surviving our death to console other men in the 'midst of other woe', a momentary way of living out of time. This is true but obviously not all one needs to know for living well..."

"The general tenor of the poem belies the conclusion. Not only is it tinged with nostalgia throughout but stanza three and four suggest that the timeless world has pathos too."

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6. Charles Patterson

"This Ode should not be regarded as lyric of escape and should not be taken to represent Keats as a young man unwilling to face life as, it is. The duality of the theme of this Ode is indicated in the very opening stanza where we find a clue to Keats's real attitude toward the permanence of the Urn and the supremacy of art. In this opening stanza Keats gives us a contrast between something unchanging (the Urn) because it is dead and something transient because it is alive. This equipoise is continued in the second stanza but the poet continues to toy with his dual matter, without asserting or implying that lasting permanence is superior to transient passion. Nor does he indicate any preference in the third stanza, though the emphasis here, as in the second stanza is upon the warmth and turbulence of life, we have not been made to feel that Keats has any distinct preference for an unrealised but permanent love over an actually experinced and vital passion. In the fourth stanza we are carried into a world that is permanent but permanently empty just as the figures on the Urn are permanent but permanently lifeless. In the final stanza the poet ends his dual game. Here he emphatically addresses this thing of beauty as just what it is, a Grecian urn. This work of art has teased us out of thought, that is, out of the world of actual into an ideal world in which we can momentarily and imaginatively enjoy the life that is free from the particular imperfections of our lot here. But this ideal world is not free of all imperfections ; it has very grave deficiencies, for it is lifeless, motionless, cold, unreal. The brief Journey into fairyland is over and Keats unmistakably means it to be over."

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Like the *Ode to A Nightingale*, it was written in the spring of 1819 and soon afterwards this was also recited by him, in course of a walk with Haydon through the Kilburn Meadows 'in a deep and thrilling chant.' It was Haydon who had introduced the youthful poet to the Elgin Marbles and roused his interest in Greek sculpture. It was published in January 1820.

Metre—As in the Nightingale Ode, the stanza is regular. It consists of a quatrain with two alternate rhymes and a sestet of three rhymes, which, however, are not arranged in a regular manner. The lines are all iambic and decasyllabic.

Stanza I. The Grecian urn with its permanent record of the scenes of ancient life.

unravish'd, unaffected by the ravages of time.

bride of quietness, wedded to 'a noiseless inarticulate condition.' The same idea continues in *silence of* line 2. The urn does not speak, has not spoken through ages. Its art alone speaks.

silence and slow time, means long silence by Hendiadys. Hendiadys is the use of two nouns connected by and to convey

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a meaning which is obtained by converting one of the nouns into an adjective *e. g.*, 'night and dew' (nightly dew), 'perfume and flowers' (perfumed flowers).

Sylvan, silvan, rural, Lat, silvanus, wood.

historian, the urn depicting rural scenes is a record of the rural life of the past.

thus, even though wedded to silence, the urn by its art can express more ably than verse.

flowery tale, decorative flowers border the figures ; *tale* like *historian* suggests continuity of interest.

than our rhyme, sculpture is regarded as superior to poetry.

leaf fring'd legend, ornamental leaf-work bordering the figures on the urn.

haunts, suggests the romantic character of the mythological tale or legend.

shape, draws our attention to the definite form or structural perfection of the urn.

Of deities.....both, the question is put, the answer bring left to the imagination.

Tempe, a vale in Thessaly, famous in idyllic poetry, specially noted in Virgil's *Georgies*, which Keats probably knew.

Arcady, an ideal pastoral country in classical literature.

maidens loth, loth or unwilling to be pursued, their apparent shyness or unwillingness heightening the zest of the pursuing lover.

struggle, on the part of the maiden.

pipes and timbrels, musical instruments used in the sacrificial procession referred to in Stanza IV.

timbrel, very much like a drum.

will ecstasy, the ecstatic delight of deep religious fervour.

Stanza II. The power of plastic art to stimulate our imagination.

but those unheard, 'the infinite beauty of musical feeling', imagination being stirred supplies many musical notes.

sensual ear, the physical organ *i.e.*, the ear, one of the senses.

more endear'd, conferring more abiding and sweeter pleasure.

of no tone, of no particular tone and thus, of infinite variety.

Fair youth.....she be fair ! 'the figures and foliage of the urn live most really, yet with an arrested, crystallised life, the painter's and sculptor's *Moment's life of things that love.*' —(*Downer*). A single moment is made eternal by plastic

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art. The pipes, the trees, the lover and the damsel he chases have all passed away but here on the urn they live for ever. 'The artist has caught and exhibited the situation of the moment and it abides deathless.' —(*Downer*).

those trees de dare, the leaves will never be shed.

winning, reaching.

For ever.....fair ! Art has conferred eternality on love and beauty. In real life, however,

"Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow."

In love as depicted on the urn, bliss or consummation is denied and thus satiety cannot follow and the passion continues unabated and the beauty which roused the passion does not also fade away.

Stanza III. What art loses in reality, it gains in permanence.

happy, because, for ever green.

spring, is eternal in the trees on the urn.

unwearied, never tried.

still to be enjoy'd, the pleasure in the ardent pursuit, not in the attainment. The warmth remains unabated owing to the joy of expectancy.

All breathing.....above, the love made eternal by art transcends all earthly love.

a heart.....cloy'd, melancholy and satiety follow the consummation or gratification of earthly love. *Cf.* Shelley, *To A Skylark* :

"Thou lovest ; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety."

A burning.....tongue, palpitation of the head and drying of the tongue are the unpleasant effects of earthly love. *Cf.*

Ode of Sapho.

"Yea, my tongue is broken, and through and through me.
'Neath the flesh impalable fire runs tingling."

where she describes the tortures of love.

Stanza IV. A perfect picture of a sacrificial holiday.

Who.....sacrifice ? The vividness of the picture is intesified by the interrogative style. Who are the people in the sacrificial procession ? Who is the god ? Where is the alter of green turf on which the heifer is to be sacrificed ?

Mysterious, he and his destination both being unknown.

lowing at the skies, a very natural picture of the heifer stretching out her neck to low 'at the skies.'

silken, soft and glossy.

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What little town, 'Not only is there permanence in what is depicted on the urn, there is permanence in what is omitted.' —(*Downer*). The location of the little town is left to the imagination.

peaceful citadel, because preparations for war would not make a sacrificial holiday possible.

pious morn, a pagan phrase, indicating the day of religious festival. *Cf.* Keats, *Ode to Psyche*,

"Holy the air, the water, and the fire."

Keats had an instinctive appreciation of pagan rituals also.

can e'er return, neither the sculptor nor the inhabitants of the 'little town' can return to this earth.

Stanza V. The 'immutable law of beauty and its identification with truth.

Attic, literally Athenian. Athens was 'the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence,' hence Attic is equivalent to Greek.

fair attitude, looks beautiful as it stands, the word 'attiude' having been suggested by the sound of the word 'Attic.'

brede, a variant of 'braid.' The marble urn is braided over with human figures.

trodden weed, grass trampled upon by human feet.

silent form, *Cf.* 'bride of quietness.' Being silent it cannot answer the questions of the poet.

tease us out.....eternity, the infinite baffles and confuses the human mind, just so, the marble urn raises feelings which are incomprehensible.

Cold Pastoral, a pastoral poem or an eclogue in marble.

generation waste, *cf.* 'hungry generations' of the *Nightingale Ode*.

other woe, this is the only personal touch in this Ode. The poet transfers his own woes to the world. The urn will continue to be a silent witness of the sufferings of later generations.

a friend to whom, 'the prophet of consolation with an oracular message' for humanity, which is summed up in five 'pregnant words.'

"*Beauty is truth, truth beauty*," the identification of truth and beauty and beauty is known to all students of Indian Philosophy. One may argue that all truths are not beautiful and some are positively ugly. Similarly a starry sky reflected in translucent water may be more beautiful than the sky itself, but it is not true. Such discussions, however, are totally irrelevant to the message of the urn, which, in Matthew Arnold's language is briefly this—'to see things in their beauty is to see things in their truth.' Keats says in

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prose, 'What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth.' Keats knew further that perception of beauty always leads to joy. *Cf. Endymion.*

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

'Any beauty which is not truthful (if any such there be) and any truth which is not beautiful (if any such there be) is of no practical importance to mankind in their mundane condition : but in fact there are none such, for, to the human mind beauty and truth are one and the same thing.'

That is all Ye know.....know, this is not the message of the urn but the comment of the poet, which in spite of the element of exaggeration, shows clearly his deep devotion to the principle of beauty governing the entire universe. In life, however, we have to know many other things besides the great principle enunciated by the poet as Matthew Arnold rightly points out, 'No it is not all ; but it is true, deeply true and we have deep need to know it.' He comments further, "It is no small thing to have so loved the principle of beauty as to perceive the necessary relation of beauty with truth, and of both with joy.

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3

ODE TO PSYCHE

O Goddess ! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung,
Even into thine own soft-conched ear :
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes ?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp' ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied ;

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass,
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too ;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love :
The winged boy I knew :
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?
His Psyche truth !

O latest-born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded heirarchy !
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none
Nor altar heap'd with flowers ;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours ;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming ;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,

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When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympains,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours ;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming ;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep ;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep ;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With all the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same :
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in !

INTRODUCTION

This ode is based on a Greek legend. According to this legend, Psyche was a King's daughter, so beautiful that even Aphrodite, the goddess of youth and beauty, became jealous of her. The goddess sent her son Cupid to inspire the maiden with love for some base unworthy creature, but Cupid himself fell in love with her. He visited her every night under the cover of darkness. Psyche became curious to know who her lover was and lighted a candle. A drop of hot wax fell on Cupid's shoulders. The god awoke and ran away from her in great anger. Psyche wandered in search of Cupid, till she was captured by Aphrodite, who kept her as slave and set her many impossible tasks. Finally, she was forgiven by Aphrodite, re-united to Cupid, and made a goddess. Thus she was the last or "the latest born" of the Greek goddesses.

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The legend typifies the purification of the human soul through suffering. Keats's Ode is based upon the Greek legend. *However, the regards Psyche as the personification of Beauty rather than of the human soul.*

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. The poet addresses the goddess Psyche and prays to her to forgive him for singing the secret of her love for Cupid, even to herself in his unmelodious poem. But he remembers the story of their love, and this sweet memory urges him to sing of it. One day he wandered through a forest, when suddenly to his great surprise, he saw two beautiful creatures lying side by side on the soft grass. Multi-coloured flowers bloomed on all sides and a stream flowed nearby with a sweet murmuring sound. The two fair creatures slept in peace with their arms and wings folded in a warm embrace. Their lips seemed to have been separated by sleep in the very act of kissing. It looked as if they were about to kiss each other, and that they will certainly out-number past kisses by day-dawn. The Poet at once recognised Cupid, and he knew that the other one could be none else but Psyche, his true beloved. The poet is not sure whether it was all a dream, or whether he really saw the scene he has described in the stanza.

Stanza 2. The poet addresses Psyche as the "latest born" of the Greek gods and goddesses, because she was the last to be raised to the status of a goddess and included in the well-known order of Olympian gods. Though last to become a goddess, she is the loveliest of all goddesses. She is as beautiful as the Moon shining in the saphire blue of the sky or the evening star, Venus, that shines like a glow-worm in the sky. As she was the latest born of the divines, she was never worshipped as gods and goddesses are worshipped. No temple was built for her, no alters were heaped with flowers for her, and no maidens ever chanted prayers to her. She had no prophets and no oracles of her own, and no sweet incense was ever wafted up to her. Though the poet is born in an age remote and distant from those pious days when the air, the water, and the fire, were alike holy, he can still see with his mind's eye the beautiful Psyche living on Mt. Olympus and fluttering her bright wings. He therefore, intends to be her choir and sing to her at midnight. He, will also be her oracle and her prophet.

Stanza 3. The poet is determined to be the high priest of Psyche and to worship her as other gods and goddesses were worshipped in ancient Greece. But there be a difference. He will build for her a temple, but the temple will be situated in the innermost regions of his mind. It will be surrounded by pine-trees, like other temples, but the pines will be his own lofty thoughts, the result of pain and suffering. The resulting of the wind through these pines, the murmuring of the stream flowing nearby, and the sweet singing of the birds and humming of the bees shall make such sweet music that even the Dryads

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shall be lulled to sleep. In the midst of such a forest, he will build the shrine of the goddess. He will decorate it with roses and all such flowers as the gardener Fancy or immagination can device. Every delight that can be imagined will be provided in the temple. At night, the windows shall remain open, and a torch shall be kept burning so that her lover, Cupid, may easily find his way in.

The passage constitutes one of the finest examples of, "inner landscape", painting in poetry.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date and Occasion of the Poem

The Ode to Psyche is also one of Keats's most famous odes. It was written in April 1819. According to Keats's own letter to his brother, this was the only poem with which he had taken 'moderate pains'. He wrote this poem leisurely. *I think it reads the more richly for it, and will, I hope, encourage me to write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit.*" (Keats). The poem is an attempt to bring into focus the neglected heathen goddess Psyche.

The Legend of Psyche

The story of Psyche can be found in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius. Psyche (literally meaning the human soul) was a mortal woman, whose beauty roused the jealousy of Venus. She sent her son Cupid to make Psyche fall in love with some ugly creature but he himself fell in love with her. He visited her every night under cover of darkness but forbade her to attempt to see him. Psyche's sisters out of jealousy told her that he must be a monster. One night as Cupid was sleeping, Psyche could not restrain herself, she lighted an oil lamp and as she looked at the face of her divine lover, she was so agitated that she let fall a drop of hot oil on Cupid's face. Cupid was indignant at her disobedience and left her. Remorseful and disconsolate, she went all over the world in search of her lover and had to perform impossible and fearful tasks set on her by Venus. But the gods helped her and Jupiter at Cupid's entreaty brought her to heaven and at last consented to her marriage with Cupid. The story of Apuleius symbolises the human soul being exalted and made immortal through love. But Keats like a true Pagan is interested in the legend of Psyche, not in its symbolical value.

Symbolism of the Poem

No doubt the poem manifests a profound influence of Greek myths on Keats. The poet has been inspired by the Psyche myth, and he introduces in the poem the atmosphere of Greek worship. But the poem is not merely a piece of lovely decorative mythology. It is probably something more. Psyche is the soul, not recognised as goddess in Greek mythology. Spiritual values associated with Psyche speak of the powers of imagination of Keats.

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The Theme of the Poem

The theme of the poem is the theme of invocation. The poet invokes the Goddess of poetry in the beginning of the poem, and tells her or in other words explores for himself what constitutes real poetry for him. The myth of Psyche only provides him with a framework to work out the substance of the poetry as he would like it to be. He nostalgically remembers the hellenic days when the subject of poetry was the mystery of and exploration of human nature. That is missing now and he promises to Psyche to create poetry which will celebrate human love indistinguishable from Nature. That is why the setting of the mental landscape against the natural landscape.

Development of Thought

Keats addresses the sexual goddess Psyche. He seeks pardon from her for expressing her love secrets. He dreamt Psyche and Cupid lying together clasped in embrace in the recess of a deep forest.

Psyche was never assigned any temple. She was not worshipped like a goddess ; she was treated like a heathen goddess. Though she is prettier than many gods in the Greek mythology, she was never worshipped.

Keats assures Psyche that he will make a temple for her in the deep recess of his mind. His thoughts and feelings will serve as incense, flowers and other paraphernalia required for worship. Psyche will find a fitting sanctuary in no way inferior to that of other gods and goddesses. He will keep a torch burning, and a window open in the temple of his mind so that Cupid may enter the sacred temple to meet his beloved, Psyche.

Love for Nature

The poem is remarkable for its delicate feeling for nature particularly in the two stanzas in which the mystic lovers, Psyche and Cupid, are shown couched side by side :

> "In deepest grass beneath the whisp'ring roof
> Of leaves and trembled blossoms where there ran
> A brooklet....."

Every beauty that flowers have—scent, form, stillness, coolness, colouring is summed up in

> 'Mid hush'd, coolrooted flowers fragrent-eyed
> Blue, silver-white and budded Tyrian.'

Nature here appeals to every sense. We find here the essence of all that makes the beauty of flowers satisfying and comforting. Here is the feast of sensuous beauty, Nature's loveliness and the variety of colours.

Imagery

The poem is also remarkable for its sexual imagery, *e.g.* :

> "Their arm embraced, and their pinions too
> Their lips touch'd not but had not bade adieu."

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The poem has a number of pictures. The pictures of both Psyche and Cupid are very remarkable.

Conclusion

Swinburne admires this ode as "being the most pictorial and perhaps the tenderest in its ardour of passionate fancy." *Robert Bridges* agrees with him, and after pointing out some of its flaws, claims that "it quences all dissatisfactions." *Sidney Colvin* finds something strained in the turn of its thought, expression and imagery.

The Metre

The stanzas are not uniform and the rhyme arrangement not regular. The rhymes are sometimes alternate, sometimes consecutive. By introduction of feminine rhymes and by skilful changing of the rhyme pattern, a wonderful effect has been produced.

CRITICAL OPINIONS

1. Sidney Colvin

In this ode, Keats employs a stanza of a lengthened type approaching those of Spenser's nuptial odes, but not regularly repeated. Keats had long been enamoured of the theme of this poem as the following lines in the opening poem of his first book show :

> So felt he, who first told Psyche went
> On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment.

There are in this poem some cloying touches of the kind too common in his love scenes but they are more than compensated by the exquisite freshness of the natural scenery in the midst of which the mythical lovers lie in an embrace : "Mid hush'd, cool rooted flowers, fragrant eyed." Perhaps no other poet has compressed into a single line so much of the true life and charm of flowers, of their power to stir the spirit of man through all his senses at once.

In this ode, we have such phrases as the "moss lain Dryads" and the soft couched ear" of Psyche. However it must be admitted that there is something strained in the turn of thought and expression whereby the poet offers himself and the homage of his own mind to Psyche. The homage which he wishes to pay to her in lieu of the worship of antiquity which she was denied because she came too late....

> "The metaphor with which the famous fourth stanza opens...."

"Yes, I will be thy priest", etc., has especially this particular flaw. Yet over such difficulties the true lover of poetry will find himself swiftly carried, until he pauses breathless and delighted at the entrance to the Sanctuary prepared by the Gardener Fancy." The reader is here charmed by the glow and music of the verse with its hurrying pace and the reader's mind is enthralled by the beauty of the invocation of the imagery."

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2. L. M. Jones

Psyche symbolises, of course, the soul in the old sense of the word, the sum total of the human consciousness. For Keats, we may be sure, a most important component of that consciousness was the imagination. In promising to worship Psyche, he was announcing his intention allegorically of the human soul, of glorifying the imagination, of studying the human mind in order to show how an awareness of its complexity could enrich human experience....

"It is essentially appropriate that Keats chose Psyche as his object of worship because for him, the best means of approaching the immortal world was through the use of most active ingredient of the human soul the imagination."

3. Harold Bloom

Keats's use of the word 'feign' recalls Touchstone—"No truly for the truest poetry is the most feigning."

Keats's rich word 'feign' with its mingled dignity and ruin is parallel to the word 'artifice' in Yeats' myth of the poetic self-recogniton in *Sailing to Byzantium*. Yeats appeals to the beings who stand in the holy fire of the state. Blake even called Eden where the creator and the creation are one. It is a fire that can be walked through, it will not singe a sleeve. Yet it can consume the natural heart away. This is Yeats' prayer to his masters in the fire, who would include Blake, Shelley and Keats...In this poem Keats arrests in concreteness a particular kind of goddesses who renews consciousness and thus renews the earth, and for Keats the earth is enough. Keats grows a foliage within his mind so as to have a natural shrine for Psyche the truth of the imagination, for he is uncertain of the kind of truth involved but gives instead the holiness of the hearts' affection."

4. Kenneth Allot

To Psyche is the cindrella of Keat's great odes. But it is hard to see why it should be neglected and two poems imply that the conventional treatment of the poem above on a 'Grecian Urn'.

The poem moves through stages. In the first stage, Keats sets out to praise Psyche as the neglected goddess whose suffering and mistakes represent the inevitable conditions of human experience. She has achieved 'identity', and lasting happiness. Love is her companion. Keats uses the convention of a sudden vision or walking dream which comes to him when he is wandering thoughtlessly.....

.....A complete image, accumulated from these details, is being offered as the equivalent of a mental state which may be negatively defined by what it excludes. Calculations, anxiety and deliberate activity are shut out. The "wide quiteness" of the valley represents a mood in which the soul will be able to breathe freely. In this may be coaxed to put forth its buds and nameless stars. The soul is promised a rich indolence which will safeguard its natural gift for

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delight. The sanctuary will be made lovely and inviting with all the resources of a poetic imagination and these resources are infinite for fancy "breeding flowers will breed the same." In this luxurious abode, Psyche will be disposed to welcome the visits of love (whose soft delight was still for Keats the soul's "chief intensity"). Perhaps the final implications are : (a) that whole heartedness can never be lost while Psyche is willing to welcome love in at her casement, and (b) that love, poetry and indolence are the natural medicines of the soul against the living death it must accept cold philosophy."

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Stanza I. Invocation and the poet's vision of Psyche.

tuneless, unmelodious.

numbers, verses.

wrung.....dear, obviously reminiscent of Milton's lines in *Lycidas* :

> "And with forc'd fingers rude,
> Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
> Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
> Compels me to disturb your season due."

soft conched, the epithet 'combines the curved beauty of a sea-shell with the tender softness of a young maiden's flesh'.

winged Psyche, Psyche is generally represented as having the wings of a butterfly.

awaken'd, wakeful.

In deepest.....espied, note the effect produced by the repetition of 's'. One may hear almost the rustling of the leaves.

trembled, trembling, as the flowers are shaken by the breeze blowing in a forest.

Stanza II. Love-embrace of Psyche and Cupid.

fragrant-eyed, the flowers are imagined to envelop the lovers with a sweet odour and also to look upon them, the nuptial bed having been provided by the 'deepest grass' beneath the whispering roof 'of leaves'. These flowers grow along the grass.

'Mid...fragrant eyed, Nature here appeals to every sense. We find here 'the essence of all that makes the beauty of flowers satisfying and comforting.'

Blue.....Tyrian, Keats is here luxuriating in a variety of colours as in the opening stanza of his *Autumn* Ode.

Tyrian, purple, from a dye made at Tyre, one of the cities of the old Syrian empire.

colm-breathing, divine breath is calm as opposed to the agitated breath of human beings.

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bedded grass, bed of grass.

had not adieu, ready on awaking to kiss again.

soft handed slumber, the mesmeric influence of sleep.

At tender.....love, Aurora is the goddess of morning. Their eyes will open to love 'renewed and fresh as morning'.

winged boy, Cupid.

dove, a term of endearment.

Stanza III. Psyche without the homage of ancient pagan rituals.

latest.born, Psyche was not defied till after the post-Augustan period.

lovelicts, because 'latest born.'

Olympus, originally Mt. Olympus in Thessaly, supposed to be the abode of the gods in ancient mythology, later identified with the vault of heaven.

faded hierarchy, because of their ancient origin and because the Olympian deities are on longer worshipped in a Christian era. Keats regards them as embodiments of many a poetic myth and sentiment.

Phoebe, Diana or goddess of the moon.

sapphire region'd star, Venus, often known as the moon star which shines so fairly in the deep blue nightly sky.

Vesper, the evening star or Venus.

amorous glow-worm, Venus, the goddess of love. The sun has gone down and like a glow-worm emitting phosphorescent light in some green spot, it is shining in the sky.

Fairer than these.....prophet dreaming, these lines will illustrate Keats's innate sympathy with the piety and beauty of a faith long passed away, with the aesthetic attraction of heathen worship and its appeal to all the senses. "The eye is filled with the beauty or architecture of the pagan temple, the ear with the intricate and delicate harmonies of choral and instrumental music, the sense of smell with 'incense sweet', and above all, the overawed imagination with the reverence for sacred places, the oracular utterance of the unseen deity and the vague and terrifying raptures of the inspired priest" (*—Downer*).

temple, no temple has been erected in your honour by mortal hands.

heap'd, on festal days altars are heaped with flowers.

delicious moan, wild and plaintive choral music.

No voice.....dreaming, *cf.* Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity,*

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"The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving,
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell."

In the cadence and in the effect of the feminine rhyme, there is a remarkable similarity.

Incense sweet, fragrant incense.

chain-swung censer, the senser or the pan in which incense or any aromatic substance is burned is suspended by chains fastened to the roof. *Cf.* 'A Chain-drooped lamp' (Keats : *The Eve of St. Agnes*) and Coleridge's *Christabel,*

"The lamp with twofold silver chain,
Is fastened to an angel's feet."

teeming, being produced abundantly.

oracle, the mysterious utterance of the unseen deity.

pale-mouth'd, the pallor of the face of the acolyte is symptomatic of the excitement caused by prophetic frenzy.

prophet dreaming, in moments of spiritual exaltation the acolyte is imbued with prophetic powers.

Stanza IV. The poet will take the place of the ancient devout pagan.

too late, Psyche had no temple, no cult in ancient times. She was too late for all this. She was deified when people could not really believe in such deities.

believing, faith is the essence of all religious.

holy water.....fire, such pagan conceptions are also familiar to a pious Hindu, Paganism was polytheistic and peopled air, fire, etc., with deities whose presence consecrated everything.

lucent fans, luminous wings.

faint Olympians, faded vision of the past.

by my own eyes inspired, the inspiration having come to him from the vision of the immortal lovers, seen in a dream or with wakeful eyes.

So let me.....prophet dreaming, the repetition of the phrases, characteristic of Keats, is strikingly felicitous here.

Stanza V. The poet himself will be Psyche's priest and supply all that is needed for her ardent worship.

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fane -

ann, temple.

untrodden, unexplord, unfrequented and sacred, suggested by the deep forest in which he saw the vision of the divine lovers.

Where branched thoughts.....sleep, incidently Keats recreates all the romance, loveliness, beauty and splendour of an Alpine scene.

branched thoughts, thoughts are assimilated to the branches of the pine trees.

new-grown.....pain, every act of creation involves pain, which is followed by infinite pleasure.

shall murmur, corresponds to the 'Whispering roof' of the forest.

dark-cluster'd trees, the density of the foliage will ensure complete privacy.

Fledge, provide with feathers. The trees are compared with the feathers of a bird.

wild-ridged mountains, the precipitous ridges of the mountains are covered with trees. *Cf.* Keats's letter to Tom, June 29, 1818, describing a waterfall which 'oozes out from a cleft in perpendicular Rocks, all fledged with Ash and other beautiful trees.'

moss-lain, couched upon moss which grows on trees in unfrequented forests.

Dryads, wood-nymphs living in trees, their life terminating with the trees which they inhabit.

wreath'd, interwoven.

a working brain, the creative poetic genius being at work.

buds and bells and stars, flower-buds that open into bells and stars.

without a name, nameless and innumerable, because left to the poetical imagination.

Fancy.....feign, whatever the poetical imagination as gardener can plant or invent.

Who.....same, *cf.* Keats's *Fancy* :

> "She will bring, inspite of frost,
> Beauties that the earth hath lost ;
> She will bring thee, all together
> All delights of summer weather ;
> All the buds and bells of May
> From dewy sward or thorny spray."

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shadowy thought, vague or indefinite poetical thought. 'Shadowy reminds us of the cover of darkness in which Cupid and Psyche met.

A bright torch, so that Psyche would not be required to light an oil-lamp again and there would be no recurrence of the unhappy incident of the hot oil dropping which had caused the disappearance of Cupid.

To let the warm Love in, refers to the legendary nocturnal visit of Cupid, the amorous lover of the earthly woman, Psyche.

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4

ODE TO FANCY

Ever let the fancy roam !
Pleasure never is at home :
At a touch sweet pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her :
Open wide the mind's cage—door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming :
Autumn's red-lippe'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting : What do then ?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night ;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
—Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overawed,
Fancy, high-commission'd :—send her
She has vassals to attend her ;
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost ;
She will bring thee, altogether,
All delights of summer weather ;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or throny spray ;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth ;
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest carols clear ;

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Rustle of the reaped corn ;
Sweet birds antheming the morn :
And in the same moment—hark !
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one, glance, behold
The daisy and the merigold ;
White plumed lilies and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of mid-May ;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep ;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin ;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn tree,
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest ;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;
Acorns ripe down pattering
While the autumn breezes sing.

O, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Every thing is spoilt by use :
Where 's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gazed at ? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new ?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary ? Where's the face
One would meet in every place ?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft ?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind :
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide ;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's, when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet
While she held the goblet sweet,

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And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash ;
Quickly break her prison-string,
And such joys as these she'll bring.
Let the winged Fancy roam !
Pleasure never is at home.

PARAPHRASE

Lines (1-8). These lines serve as an introduction and invocation to Fancy. The gist of the whole poem lies in the two lines,

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home :

The poet has used Fancy in the sense in which it was used in the Restoration age. We should give a free range to fancy. Pleasure is not to be found in reality but in the boundless region of thought, which Fancy alone can explore. The poet now gives a vivid image. Just as the bubbles melt away when the rain-drops strike them, so pleasure disappears at the slightest disturbance. Therefore, we should allow full freedom to the faculty of imagination. Fancy can fly. Therefore, it is supposed to have wings. Fancy explores boundless regions through thought, but it flies even beyond thought. Keats again uses a vivid image. Fancy is a bird shut, as it were, in the cage of human mind. The poet asks to open wide that cage-door. When the door is open imagination will fly at a great speed just like an arrow.

Lines (9-15). Let us set imagination free. The joys of summer are wasted because of use and the resultant satiety. So is the case with the spring. Spring and its flowers are spoiled when they are enjoyed. They do not survive enjoyment. The flowers sicken and die. Autumn and its red flowers also meet the same fate. They flush through mist and dew and sicken when enjoyed. Joys are always spoilt by use. Everything enjoyed causes satiety, and then sickens and dies.

Lines (16-25). The true season for the poet is winter. He sits by the fire-side. The dry faggots are burning bright. The flames are the very spirit of winter because it supplies warmth and animates us. The silent earth is covered all over with snow. The flakes of snow are dislodged from the heavy shoes of the ploughboy when he walks home in the evening. The picture of winter perhaps owes a hint to the song at the close of *Love's Labours Lost* "*when iciles hang by the wail.*" The dark conspiracy between the Night and the Noon refers to the short, dark, winter days, which have no evening at all. In winter there is hardly any twilight and the night comes suddenly, banishing almost the evening twilight.

Lines (26-36). The true season for the poet is winter. Then, as he sits by the fireside, he sends his fancy on her travels and she brings him all the joys of all the seasons in their ideal perfection.

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Keats sits by the fireside and lets his imagination roam all over the world in order to enjoy all the joys of life. The mind becomes conscious of its own power of imagination. Imagination is entrusted with great responsibilities. It is employed on the grand commission of bringing together the pleasures of various seasons. She has faculties (e.g. the faculty of recollection) to offer her service like the vassals of feudal times. Though it is winter, imagination can bring forth beauties that have passed away into the oblivion of the past. She can bring beauties of summer and autumn in winter days. She can bring all the joys of summer, the flowers of May, the dewy grass or thorny spray and the abundant store of autumnal fruits in a quiet, unobtrusive manner. Imagination can mix up these pleasures with three wines in a cup. The blending of the delights of spring, summer and autumn is like the mixing of three wines in a wine-cup. Though it is winter, one can by the help of imagination listen to (a) the song of the reapers, mellowed by distance, (b) the rustling of the reaping corn, (c) the plaintive anthem of the nightingale to welcome the morning, (d) the singing of the April lark, and (e) the cawing of the rooks who are searching busily for straw and faggots to build their nests with.

At a single glance of the mind one can enjoy the delights of flowers of various seasons. He can see (a) the daisy, (b) the marigold flower, (c) white-feathered lilies, (d) the first hedge grown primrose that has bloomed recently, (e) the wild hyacinth, or a blue-bell, with its bells of shaded sapphire-blue, which lies like a smoke over woodland glades in May, and (f) all the leaves and flowers always blossomed with dew because these flowers of all seasons are imagined as blooming all at the same moment.

He can see (a) the dormice coming out of their holes in the corn fields, (b) the lean snakes casting their skins on the sunny land, (c) the female birds sitting in their nests over their eggs, (d) the flocks of bees being scattered, and (e) the birds being scared away by the bees. One can also see or hear the fruits of the oak tree dropping on the ground with a pattering sound while the breezes are blowing with their own song.

Lines (67-94). Imagination can bring not only the beauties of external nature but also the ideal of love. No earthly woman can ever satisfy, however, fair she is. The poet will weary of her. But his fancy will conceive for him an ideal mistress. *Where's the cheek that doth not fade* refers perhaps to Fanny Brawne, *'too much gazed at'* refers to his *Ode to Fanny*.

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast ?
What stare outfaces now my silver moon ?

Nothing can survive enjoyment. The mature lips, the blue eyes, the beautiful face, the melodious voice and everything else loses its beauty as time passes. Therefore only imagination can find a perfect beautiful woman like Proserpine who had attractive eyes. Proserpine was carried off by Pluto, king of the world of the dead. Ceres, who

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was the goddess of the fruits to earth, mourned for Proserpine so inconsolably that all our harvests were spoilt, and Jupiter sent Mercury to fetch Proserpine back ; but Proserpine had unwisely eaten part of a pomegranate among the shades with the result that even Mercury could not wholly free her and thenceforward she spent four months of every year in the neither world and the rest with his mother. Pluto chiding and tormenting Proserpine is not supported by classical mythology. Keats is attributing to Pluto the qualities of Satan. Pluto did not teach her frowning and chiding. Imagination can bring a beautiful woman like Hebe, the goddess of youth, who possessed white waist and hips. She would look most tempting when her skirt and petticoat would drop from her waist revealing to the eye the loveliest naked lower limbs, when she would hold the golden goblet of wine in her soft hands.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The poem was written in the winter of 1818-19 and was published in 1820. In this very beautiful Ode addressed to 'Fancy' or 'Imagination', the poet praises highly the pleasures of imagination. He describes how fancy can bring to a man all curious and contradictory delights which are not to be found in real life. The transitoriness of things is matched by the mind's own incapacity to remain content. The enjoying of the spring fades just as much as does the actual blossoming. The rich fulfilment of autumn, even if it remained stationary, would cloy :

> Where's the cheek that doth not fade
> Too much gazed at ?"

which is the eye that does not ultimately "weary"? Only through the constant rearrangement and recombination of things by the imagination can the heart's desire appear to be fulfilled.

Summer, spring, and autumn, the seasons of highest natural beauty, can never give real lasting delight, because of the imperfection and weariness which belong to all earthly pleasures. The true season for the poet is winter. Then, as he sits by the fireside, he sends his fancy on her travels, and she brings him all the joys of all the seasons in their ideal perfection. And not only will she bring the beauties of external nature, but also the ideal of love. No earthly woman can ever satisfy however fair she is : the poet will weary of her. But his fancy will conceive for him an ideal mistress. Fancy has an unlimited realm of her own. Let Fancy go forth then on her creative errand.

The ode is a fine example of the poet's sensuousness, and felicity of expression.

The poem is a song in praise of imagination. True content can only be found in the joys of the mind of which, precisely because we can never altogether grasp them, we never weary. Keats compares imagination with a web, and then with a bird in the cage. The bird should be released from the cage. Imagination when released from

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the mind's cage would conjure up paragons of beauty. When the entanglement of the fancy is broken, it would bring to a man all curious and contradictory delights which are not to be found in real life.

The poem is influenced by Milton and Shakespeare. According to A. R. Weekes, "The influence of Milton is clearly visible in the exquisite metrical harmony of the poem. Echoes are caught from *L'allegro* and *Il'Penseroso* both consisting mainly of seven-syllabled couplets." The picture of winter in line 19 owes a hint to the song at the close of *Love's Labours Lost*. The line 44 "the early April lark" also echoes the spring song at the close of *Love's Eobour's Lost*.

The poem is rich in sensuousness and description of Nature. Of the birds the poet writes :

> Thou shalt hear,
> Distant harvest-carols clear :
> Rustle of the reaped corn,
> Sweet birds antheming the morn,
> And in the same moment—hark !
> 'Tis the early April lark,
> Or the rooks, with busy caw,
> Foraging for sticks and straw.

The poet also describes the flowers, the daisy and the marigold, white-plumed lilies, and the first hedgegrown primrose, shaded hyacinth and sapphire queen of the mid-May.

As regards the sensuousness in the poem, the following example will suffice :

> With a waist and with a side,
> White as Hebe's when her zone,
> Slipt in golden clasp, and down,
> Feel her kirtle to her feet,
> While she held the goblet sweet,
> And Jove grew languid.

The poem is written in the four accent metre and the measure is trochaic as in Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

The original version of the poem is dated 1818.

Metre—The poem is written in the four accent metre and the measure is trochaic as in Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

Stanza I. Fancy has an unlimited realm of her own. The joys of the various seasons are short-lived. On a winter night she will bring you all the wealth of autumn. 'Fancy can give us joys more lasting than the pleasure of reality.'

fancy, here it means imagination. 'Fancy' was a much stronger word in older literature. It meant love, passion or imagination.

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roam, give her a free range.

Pleasure.....home, pleasure is not to be found in reality but in the boundless region of thought, which Fancy alone can explore.

cage-door, Fancy is a bird shut as it were in the cage of human mind.

let her loose, set her free.

are spoilt, satiate or pall by their constant repetition or monotony.

its blossoming, its flowers.

red-lipped fruitage, refers to the red fruits of autumn. The epithet belongs properly to personified autumn.

blushing, like 'red-lipped' also refers to Autumn personified.

mist, autumn is noted for its abundant mist.

cloys, causes satiety.

ingle, fire-place or fire burning on hearth, may be connected with Sanskrit *agni*, Lat, *Ignis.*

sear faggot, dry logs.

Spirit.....night, the faggot as is the spirit as it supplies warmth and life on a cold winter night. It inspirits us or animates us.

caked snow, forming like hard cakes.

shuffled, shaken off.

shoon, shoes, an archaism.

when the Night.....Noon, in winter there is hardly any twilight and the night comes suddenly, banishing almost the evening twilight.

in.....conspiracy, the Night and the Noon conspire to envelop the world in darkness.

her sky, when the sun sets, the sky, should rightfully belong to 'Even' or evening.

self overaw'd, the mind is overawed by realisation of its own powers.

high commissioned, Fancy is employed on the grand commission of bringing together the pleasures of the various seasons.

vassals, faculties of the imagination offering loyal service to Fancy like the vassals of feudal times.

in spite of frost, though it is winter.

She will.....wealth, *cf. Ode on a Grecian Urn* :

> "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
> Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone."

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bells of May, bells-shaped flowers of spring.

dewy sward, producing daisies, etc.

thorny spray, yielding roses, etc.

heaped.....wealth, abundant store of autumnal fruits.

a still.....stealth, in a quite, unobtrusive and insidious manner.

three fit wines, the blending of the delights of spring, summer and autumn is like the mixing of three wines in a wine-cup.

quaff it, empty it and enjoy it.

Distant.....clear, the song of the reapers of autumn mellowed by distance.

Rustle.....corn, this also relates to autumn.

antheming, welcoming the morn by an anthem in spring.

Foraging, searching, busily for straw and faggots to build their nests with.

at one glance, at a single glance of the mind you will enjoy the delights of the various seasons.

white-plumed, provided with white feathers.

Shaded hyacinth, three meanings are suggested : (*i*) growing in shady places, (*ii*) covered or shaded with leaves, (*iii*) the bells of hyacinth are shaded sapphire-blue.

alway, archaism for 'always'.

pearled, begemmed with dew.

field-mouse, it is however, the dormouse that hibernates.

Meagre, emaciated for want of food in winter, when it hibernates.

celled sleep, in an underground cell.

winter thin, *cf.* 'spectre-thin' of the *Nightingale* Ode :

skin, slough.

Freckled, spotted.

casts, send forth.

down-pattering, falling with a rapid succession of taps.

Stanza II. Release Fancy from the cage of the mind and let her provide you with perennial pleasures.

the voice, however soft, the voice however melodious,

Dulcet eyed, 'Dulcet' is a Miltonic word, meaning 'sweet', *cf.* 'dulcet symphonies'—(*Paradise Lost*, *I*).

Ceres' daughter, Proserpine or Persephone carried off by Pluto to the nether world.

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Ere the God .....chide, this is not supported by classical mythology. Keats is attributing to Pluto the qualities of Satan, which are not applicable to Pluto, 'the majestic brother of Jupiter, at whose side upon asphodel and amaranth the sweet Persephone sits pensively contented, in that deep motionless quiet which the mortals pity and the gods enjoy." Pluto did not teach her frowning and chiding.

Hebe, the cut-bearer of Jove, the goddess of eternal youth.

zone, girdle.

kirtle, gown, a diminutive of 'skirt' according to Keats.

grew languid, Jove felt languid under the influence of the nectar poured by Hebe.

the mesh.....leash, entanglement of the cord tying down Fancy.

And such joys, an echo of *L'Allegro* :

"These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live."

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5
ODE TO POETS

Or

"BARDS OF PASSION AND OF MIRTH"

(*Written on the blank page Beaumont and Fletcher's Tragi-Comedy "The Fair Maid of the Inn"*)

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth :
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double lived in regions new ?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon ;
With the noise of fountains wond'rous,
And the parle of voices thund'rous ;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns ;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not ;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not senseless, tranced thing ;
But divine melodious truth ;
Philosophic numbers smooth ;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again ;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumber'd never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week ;
Of their sorrows and delights :
Of their passions and their spites ;
Of their glory and their shame ;
What doth strengthen and what maim.

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Thus ye teach us ; every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth !
Yet have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new !

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This Ode is found written on a blank page facing the tragico-medy of *The Four Maids of the Inn* in Keats's copy of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. It seems, therefore, to be addressed to these two bards (Beaumont and Fletcher) in particular. It was published in 1820.

The Theme of the Poem

The two bards of the poem are of Mirth and Passion. They lead a dual life. They have departed to heavenly abode and yet they live on earth through their books. In heaven they commune with the sun and the moon and listen to the music of the wonderful fountains. Seated on the Elysian lawns where Diana's fawns browse, they see and smell the rose-scented daisies. They listen to the nightingale. The song is not a senseless tranced thing.

They also live on earth through their books. They teach us how to reach heaven and how to possess souls never slumbering and never cloying. They teach us of our little week of our sorrows and delights. They teach us what weakens us and what gives us strength.

Influence of the Elizabethans

The poem was much impressed and influenced by the Elizabethan writers. This poem is an illustration. The bards of passion and of Mirth are the two Elizabethan dramatists. There are references to Milton and Shakespeare. Line 6 "Spheres of sun and moon' is an allusion to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, which, Keats believed, Milton deliberately adopted in *Paradise Lost*. He uses in the poem 'parle' which is a common Elizabethan word. Shakespeare writes in *Hamlet* "In an angry parle". Milton writes in *Comus* "Sweet queen of Parle."

Metre

As in Milton's *L'Allegro*, there are four accents and the rhythm is trochaic. There are extra syllables, however, sometimes at the beginning and sometimes at the end of a line. They lend variety to the music. He has introduced feminine rhymes too and the sense flows from one couplet to another.

Conclusion

"It is on the double immortality of poets. These (this and the *Ode to Fancy*) are specimens of a sort of rondeau which I think I

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shall become partial to because you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet." Thus wrote Keats to his brother about this poem. The rondeau is an elaborate fixed form of verse, with which neither of these odes has anything in common beyond the fact that they, like the rondeau, contain refrains or repetition of the same lines.

Keats himself said that the theme of the poem is "the double immortality of poets,"—one on this earth through their poems, and the other in heaven. The poets referred to are all poets in general, but the great Elizabethans in particular. The language used is simple, but dignified and musical. It also illustrates Keats's felicity of expression, and his artistic skill in the use of sensuous epithets and word-pictures. It is a great poem from the pen of a great poet and literary artist.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

It was published in the 1820 volume. Buxton Forman thinks that the title, *Ode on the Poets*, given to it by Palgrave in *The Golden Treasury* it not correct. Written on a blank page of Keat's Beaumont and Fletcher, it is addressed to the brother-poets, who wrote the Tragedy of *The Fair Maid of the Inn.*

Metre—As in Milton's *L'Allegro*, these are four accents and the rhythm is trochaic. There are extra syllables, however, sometimes at the beginning and sometimes at the end of a line. They lend variety to the music. He has introduced feminine rhymes too and the sense overflows from one couplet to another.

Stanza I. The souls of poets in Elysium and on earth.

Passion, sorrow (Elizabethan sense).

Bards.....Mirth, tragi-comic poets. *cf.* Heywood,

> "Mellifluous Shakespeare, whose enchanting quill
> Commanded mirth or passion."

Double-lived, after death, they live in heaven and also on earth in our memories through their books.

those of heaven, your souls in heaven.

commune.....moon, hold conversation with the sun and the moon, both being personified, *cf.* Keats, *Endymion, I*:

> "To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd
> My sight upward."

The phrase may also mean communication with the beings inhabiting the sun and the moon, *cf. Revelation*, XIX, 17 :

> "And I saw an angel standing in the sun,"

and Milton, *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 175-76 :

> "Dream not of other Worlds, that Creatures there
> Live, in what state....."

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Dante imagines that the moon 'is alloted to those, who, after having made profession of chastity, and a religious life, had been compelled to violate their vows.' (*Paradise Lost*, III).

noise, music.

parle, parley or speech.

voices thund'rous, not possibly the voice of God but the tuneful thunders of poet, *cf.* Keats's, *Odes to Appollo* :

"Expectant stand the spheres ;
Breathless the laurell'd peers,
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease."

whisper.....trees, rustling of the leaves.

And one another, Plato and Shelley imagine that the departed souls commune with one another and they are made of mind-stuff and soul-stuff.

Elysian lawns, 'plains of pleasure' in Elysium, the abode of the blest spirits according to the ancient Greeks, *cf.* Dryden's Translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, VI :

'Where long extended plains of pleasure lay.
The verdant fields with those of heaven may vie,
With aether vested and a purple sky,
The blishful seats of happy souls below."

This passage again has inspired Wordsworth's description in *Laodamia*,

"Of all that is most beauteous—imaged thee
In happier beauty : more pellucid stream,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams."

Brows'd, (nibbled), grazed.

Dian, shortened form of Diana who as Artemis is the goddess of chastity.

Underneath.....tented, the departed spirits are diminutive in size so that blue bells (wild hyacinths) may serve as tents.

blue-bells, daisies, rose, asphodel is the traditional flower of Elycium *cf.* Tennyson, *The Lotos Eaters* :

"Others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel."

Keats replaces the beds of aphodel of the ancient Greeks by bluebells etc.

rose scented, the Elysian flowers are supposed to possess superior fragrance.

a senseless, tranced thing, the song of the earthly nightingale is a kind of poetic frenzy, is delirious and meaningless

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and the song of the heavenly nightingale is a revelation of spiritual truth.

numbers, verses.

smooth, harmonious and pleasing. In *Comus*, Milton says that divine philosophy is 'musical as is Appollo's lute.'

golden histories, delightful accounts.

Stanza II. What the poets teach us.

This stanza may have inspired the following lines in *Thoughts* suggested the day following, on the banks of Nith, near the Poet's Residence, finished by Wordsworth in 1839 and published in 1842.

> 'Through busiest street and loveliest glen
> Are felt the flashes of his pen :
> .....
> Deep in the general heart of men
> His (Burns's) power survives.'

on high, Keats places Elysium somewhere in the heavens. Virgils Elysium is subterranean.

the souls ye left behind, on earth the dead poets live in their books, *cf.* Milton, *Areopagitica.*

> "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

The books are the souls of the dead poets, *cf.* Milton, *Areopagitica* :

> "As good almost kill a man as kill a good book."

the way to find you, your books show us the path to you and to heaven.

slumber'd, slumbering, the souls are for ever wakeful.

cloying, their life divine in the heavens causes no satiety.

earth-born souls, books written on earth.

their little week, brief span of life with its fever and fret, its love and hate.

maim, literally multilate, weaken.

Wisdom, *cf.* Shelley's 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.'

Stanza III. The repetition of the original lines is a characteristic of Keats.

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6
LINES ON THE MERMAID TAVERN

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine ?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison ? O generous food !
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quil
To a sheepskin gave the story—
Said he saw you in your glory
Underneath a new-old sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known—
Happy field or mossy cavern—
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?

PARAPHRASE

Sanza 1 (Lines 1-12). The poet asks the Elizabethan poets who have left for the heavenly abode, if they find Elysium better than the Mermaid Tavern. Do they find there pleasant fields and quiet caverns which are better than the Mermaid Tavern ? Do they drink there better wine than the Canary wine which was served to them at the Mermaid Tavern by 'mine host' ? Are the fruits of Paradise sweeter than the flesh of deer which they used to eat when they were in this world ? Have the souls of the dead poets discovered better food and drink than what was offered to them in the Mermaid Tavern ? The poet means that the Mermaid Tavern was surely more enjoyable haunt for the men of letters than the heaven where they live now, and the canary wine and venison were better food and drink than what they

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get in the heavenly abode. The food and the drink in the Mermaid Tavern were profusely served to the visitors. The food of the Tavern was like the food and drink enjoyed by Robin Hood. Robin Hood used to roam about in the forest of Nottinghamshire in the company of Marian, and used to drink profusely from horn and can, the only drinking vessels available in the forest. The Elizabethan poets used to drink as profusely as did the princely robber, Robbin Hood.

Stanza II (Lines 13-26). One day the sign-board of the Mermaid Tavern was missing. Nobody knew where it disappeared. He, however, found something written by an astrologer on some parchment which related the story of the disappearance of the sign-board from the earth. The sign-board of the London Mermaid is translated to one of the signs of the Zodiac. There the astrologer saw the dead poets sipping the divine beverage with a feeling of satisfaction of pleasant taste. The Mermaid Tavern of London was transferred to heaven to provide meeting place for the Elizabethan poets.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

A Pure Fun

This small ode was published in 1820. It is a humorous imitation of the classical legend of the hair of Berenice. Like Berenice's hair, the sign-board of the Mermaid Tavern takes its place in the heaven as the constellation Virgo. Robertson thinks that Keats meant the tenth sign of the Zodiac Capricornus, which is a fish-tailed goat. Possibly Keats referred neither to Virgo nor to Capricornus. He meant it as pure fun knowing full well that there is no Mermaid in the Zodiac.

The Theme

"On the Mermaid Tavern" is a brief ode on the dead and gone. Elizabethan poets who were the patrons of the Mermaid Tavern. Keats believes that perhaps they do not find better charm and pleasure in the heavenly fields as they found in the Mermaid Tavern of the earth. The Mermaid Tavern was the club-house at which the Elizabethan dramatists and wits used to assemble. There they used to drink canary wine and talk on literary topics. The poem is also a tribute to the Elizabethan writers whom Keats loved and admired most. The Elizabethan poets have gone to heaven because they were good poets. This indirectly shows the respect Keats had for Elizabethan poetry.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

This small ode was published in 1820. It is a humorous imitation of the classical legend of the hair of Berenice. On the death of Antiochus II of Syria, to whom Ptolemy III's sister had been married, Laodice, an earlier divorced wife of Antiochus murderd her and proclaimed her own son Seleucus II as Antiochus's successor. Ptolemy III set out in 245 B. C. to vindicate the claims of his sister's son. When he departed for Syria, Berenice, his wife dedicated a lock of

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her hair to the gods for his safe return. The lock of hair mysteriously disappeared but Canon, the court astronomer declared it was transformed into a constellation. This legend is the subject of a Greek elegaic poem written by an Alexanderian, Callimachus. This was imitiated later by Catullus, a Latin poet of the first century B. C. In Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, the lock of Belinda's hair is finally wafted as a star to adorn the skies. Like Berenice's hair, the signboard of the Mermaid Tavern takes its place in the heaven as the constellation Virgo (Skt., *Kanya*). Robertson thinks that Keats meant the tenth sign of the Zodiac, Capricornus, which is a fish-tailed goat. Possibly Keats referred neither to Virgo nor to Capricornus and meant it as pure fun, knowing quite well that there is no Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Metre—Same as in *Fancy* and *Bards of Passion and Of Mirth.*

Stanza I. In its playful badinage the poem resembles Catullus' poem on Berenice's hair. Have the souls of the dead poets discovered better food and drink than what was offered in the Mermaid Tavern ?

Elysium, a place in the nether world reserved for the happier and more virtuous spirits. The climate was soft and there were pleasant rivers and field of asphodel. See the notes on 'Elysian lawns' in *Bards of Passion and of Mirth.*

mossy, creates an impression that the climate was mild and equtable and the place beautifully quiet.

Mermaid Tavern, the Mermaid was the sign of the inn in Bread Street, Cheapside. Tradition has it that Walter Raleigh founded a literary club there in 1603. The inn was frequented by Ben Jonson, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Donne and others. They had wit combats there and used booze there. *Cf.* Beaumont,

> "What things have we seen
> Done at the Mermaid ! heard words that have been
> So nimble and so full of subtle flame,
> As if that any one from whence they came
> Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
> And had resolved to live a fool the rest
> Of his dull life."

mine host, Chaucer has made this phrase all his own in *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*,

'Mine host' was the appellation given to an inn-keeper or the owner of a 'hostelrye'.

Canary wine, wine from Canury Islands, off the N. W. Coast of Africa, very much appreciated in Shakespeare's time.

Venison, flesh of deer.

generous, *Lat.* generous, high-born, here it means excellent, invigorating and generously supplied.

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Drest, prepared so as to suit the taste of the highborn people.

Robin Hood, a famous English outlaw (1160-1247), was originally Earl of Huntingdon, who was outlawed when he had outrun his fortune. Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire was haunted by him and his hundred men. He lived by plundering. Little John, Friar Tuck and Maid Marian were his companions. He never allowed women to be oppressed nor did he ever rob the poor whom on the other hand he helped by what he got by stealth from the abbeys and the rich people. Robbin Hood is a character in Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Keats also wrote a poem, *Robbin Hood*.

bowse, modern colloquial, "booze", to go on drinking and to drink heavily.

horn and can, vessels for drinking.

Stanza II. The disappearance of the sign-board.

on a day, one day.

sign-board, the sign-board of 'mine host' of the Mermaid Tavern; the sign-board had the figure of a mermaid, just as the 'hostelrye' where Chaucer's pilgrims met had the picture of a tabard painted on its sign-board.

old quill, time-honoured quill pen used by the astrologer.

To a Sheepskin.....story, the astrologer recorded his prediction or readings on a sheepskin or parchment.

new-old sign, the sign-board of the Mermaid Tavern is translated to one of the Zodiacal signs.

Zodiac, an imaginary belt across the heavens in which the sun and planets were supposed to move. It was divided into twelve parts according to the position of the full moon. Each had a sign, the original Greek word for 'Zodiac' meaning 'a little animal'. All the signs were originally animals, which can be seen also in an Indian almanac. The sign Virgo was often called the Mermaid as it was represented by a figure with the head and bust of a woman and the tail of a fish.

Stanza III. A repetition of the opening lines of the Poem.

Keats employs this device of rondeau in *Fancy* and *Bards of Passion and of Mirth* also with delightful effect.

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7

TO AUTUMN

I

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run ;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease ;
For summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

II

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers ;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook ;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hour by hour.

III

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river, swallows, borne soft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;
Hedge-crickets sing, and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden croft ;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. The poet views the autumn season doing the season's work, bringing all the fruits of earth to maturity in readiness for harvesting. It is the season of the year when mists begin to rise and all fruits ripen to the core. Autumn conspires with the sun to load and bless the trees with fruits and flowers. The bees hum round flowers in large numbers, although their combs are already brimming over with honey. They feel that summer will never end, and the flowers will continue to bloom for ever.

Stanza 2. In this stanza the four different activities peculiar to autumn have been presented through four effective and vivid personifications. First, Autumn is personified as a winower sitting near her store with her hair flowing in the wind. Secondly, she is represented as a tired reaper with her sickle in her hand, resting near a half-reaped furrow, while the corn remains unreaped. Thirdly, she is represented as a gleaner going home with the fruits of the day's gathering on her head, and crossing a brook steadily without losing her balance. Lastly she is shown as a cider-maker, standing by her press and watching patiently the oozing out of the juice, hour after hour. The stanza is one of the finest instance of the poet's myth-making capacity and of his powers of picturesque description. Praising the stanza *Bernard Groom* writes, "The perfection and naturalness of this stanza shows how deep was Keats' affinity with the mythological imagination of the Greeks. A lovelier personification does not exist in poetry."

Stanza 3. The poet regrets for a moment that the songs of spring are no more, but the regret is only momentary. The very next moment he remembers that Autumn has her own music and her own beauty. At the time, the stubble field is touched with rosy hue. The small gnats are carried up and down and they sing a sweet wailful song. The lambs bleat loudly and crickets sing in hedges. The whistling of the red-breast is to be heard from the orchards, and the swallows twitter high up in the sky. Such are the pleasures of Autumn, and so, says the poet, we should not feel grieved that spring is no more.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Occasion of Composition

The poem was written in 1819. In September 1819, *Keats* wrote to John Hamilton Reynolds from Winchester : "How beautiful the season is now ! How fine the air ; A temperate sharpness about it. Really without joking, chaste weather : "Dian Skies ! I never liked stubble-fields so much as now—Aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm—this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that composed upon it." This composition was the Ode to Autumn.

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The Most Perfect Poem

To Autumn, which contains the record of his quiet September days at Winchester, is the most perfect of the odes of Keats. It is one of those works of art in which even the severest critic finds no fault, and of which the praise is unanimous. In it there is no looking before or after, no pining for what is not, but a complete abandonment to the enjoyment of the present. In the poem the poet attains that serenity which he had been seeking so far in vain. "In this unparalleled description of a richly beautiful autumn day he conveys to us all the peace and comfort which his spirit receives" (*M. R. Hills*). The entire Ode brings out the dreamy, sensuous elements of Keats' nature. The poem expresses the essence of the season but it draws no lessons, no overt comparison with human life. (*Kenneth Muir*). The other great odes like the *Ode to the Nightingale* or *On a Grecian Urn* are greater poems ; but they lack the artistic perfection and the emotional satisfaction which this ode possesses. His other odes present before us a Keats who is torn between dream and reality ; this poem offers a Keats who is composed and quiet :

The Theme of the Poem

The theme of the poem is fulfilment or maturity, and the poet has prolonged this fulfilment through the richness of the images. "Each of the three stanzas concentrates on a dominant, even archetypal, aspect of Autumn, but while doing so, admits and absorbs its opposite. The theme of the first is ripeness of growth, now reaching its climax beneath the "maturing Sun" as the strain of the weighty fruit bends the apple trees and leads the vines. Yet growth is still surprisingly going on as Autumn and the Sun conspire "to set budding more and still more, later flowers" and the bees are deceived into feeling that summer will never end."

The Development of Thought

Its three stanzas show a gradual rise of thought. In the first stanza, Autumn is viewed as the season itself, doing the season's work, bringing all the fruits of the earth to maturing in readiness for harvesting. In the second stanza, Autumn, personified in a woman's shape, is present at the various operations of the vintage. In the last stanza, the close of the year is associated with sunset ; the songs of spring are over and night is falling ; but the sense of sadness is merged in the feeling of the continuous life of nature, which externally renews itself in insect, animal and bird. The close of the ode, though solemn, breathes the spirit of hope.

The Images of the Poem

There is no misty abstraction in this poem. On the contrary, we have in this poem Keatsian virtue of density, weight and pressure. The ideas are conveyed through concrete images. The poet is lost in his images. The poem gives not only fulness and softness of autumn but also its more masculine qualities of roughness and vigour. Not

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only does it offer mellow fruitfulness and clammy cells, the fume of poppies and the last oozing, but also the moss'd cottage trees, the granary floor, the brook, the cyder-press, the stubble plains, the small gnats and the river sallows. It shows that ripeness for Keats is both a varied and an ordered concept.

The approaching death of the year has been suggested through 'contrary images'. The images used are those of fulfilled growth. These are the images of concrete life. *W. J. Balis* says about the imagery of the poem, "The ideal of energy caught in repose pervades the imagery of the poem and indeed the whole conception and 'stationing' of Autumn."

The first line of the ode shows Autumn in the abstract but the second reveals the germ of personification which is amplified in the succeeding stanzas. The remaining lines give to us sensuously beautiful pictures and convey to us the ripeness of Autumn. In the second stanza we find different pictures of the season—the harvester, the reaper, the gleaner, and the cider-maker. All personify Autumn. The third stanza reproduces for us the symphoney of the seasons' sounds—the mournful choir of the swarming gnats, the familiar bleating of the full grown lambs, the chirping of the hedge cricket and the twittering of gathering swallows in the sky.

Sensuousness

Ode to Autumn is remarkable for its sensuousness and love of Nature. It was *S. A. Brooke* who said that Keats had a way of fluttering butterfly-fashion from one object of sensuous delight to another, and the following stanza fully justifies his remark :

To bend with apples the mossed cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core :
To swell the gourd, plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel : to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has over-brimmed their clammy cells.

It is pure sensuousness, the objective directness and simplicity of feeling, and expression, the stanzas of the ode form as it were a "serene frame for toubled picture." The abundance of the season has been described with all the sensuous appeal. The vine, apples, bees, all these suggest beautiful touch and smell. The atmosphere is scented and fresh.

Other Artistic Beauties

In the second stanza, "the touches of literary and Greek personification have an exquisite congruity and lightness" (*Sidney Colvin*). The four different activities proper to autumn have been personified in a woman's shape, and the personifications have the clarity of outline and solidity of a Greek sculpture. The harvester, the reaper, the gleaner, and the cider-maker have all been vivified with classic restrain

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and absolute economy of expression. The words are so transparent and direct "that we almost forget they are words at all and nature herself and season seems speaking to us" (*Sidney Colvin*). In its rounded felicity of expression and in its faultless worksmanship, it is the best thing that Keats has left for his readers : "expressing so serene and untroubled a mood, might have been his last word to the world."

Each stanza of the poem contains eleven iambic lines of five feet or ten syllables with a slight variation of rhyme scheme in the three stanzas. The music of the Autumn which ends the poem is a music of living and dying, of staying and departure, of Summer and Winter. The wailful coil of the small gnats rises and falls as the gusts of light wind live or die. In this poem, as mentioned by Walsh, "We see genius having at its disposal a perfect sensibility. Keats's meditations on maturity, his efforts to achieve it, here issue into a disciplined poetic act, the poem exhibits like the best romantic poems a radically original first hand response to experiences and exhibits it moreover with the characteristic Keatsian virtues of density and definition, weight and pressure..."

Conclusion

In the words of *Arthur Compton-Rickett*, "Most satisfying of all the odes, in thought and expression, is the *Ode to Autumn*. Most satisfying because, for all the splendour of diction in the others, there are times, when the poetic fire dwindles for a moment whereas in this ode, from its inception to its close, matter and manner are not only superbly blended but every line carries its noble freight of beauty. The first stanza is a symphony of colour, the second a symphony of movement, and third a symphony of sound. The artist shapes the first and last, and in the midst, the man, the thinker, gives us its human significance. Thus is the poem perfected, its sensuous imagery enveloping as it were its vital idea."

CRITICAL OPINIONS

1. Kenneth Muir

...but it draws no lesson, no overt comparison, with the human life. Keats was being neither alegorical nor Wordsworthian. The poet himself is completely lost in his images, and the images are presented as meaning simply themselves. Keats's richest utterance is the barest of metaphors. The fulness of life, the joy of completion which the poem celebrates emerge from the rise the progress and the setting of the imagery.

2. A Ward

All the hours of an Autumn day are implied in this progression—misty morning, drowsy noon, and chilly sunset, all the characters, properties and stages of the Autumnal drama, in a scene that slowly widens from cottage yard to neighbouring fields and distant hills and skies; all the senses by which it is apprehended; all its

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varieties of action—motionless growth, unhurried toil langour after harvest, restless stirring before flight. The poem is a garnering of perception, a summary of achievement, a half-conscious gesture of farewell."

3. Walter Jackson Bate

Each of the three stanzas concentrates on a dominant, even archetypal, aspect of Autumn, but while doing so, admits and absorbs its opposite. The theme of the first is ripeness, of growth, now reaching its climax beneath the "maturing Sun" as the strain of the weighty fruit bends the apple trees and loads the vines. Yet growth is still surprisingly going on as Autumn and the Sun conspire "to set budding more and still more, later flowers, and the bees are deceived into feeling that summer will never end."

4. Walter Jackson Bate

It is because *To Autumn* so uniquely a distillation and at many different levels that each generation has found it one of the most nearly perfect poems in English...the whole is perfected—carried through to completion—solely by means of the given parts, and the parts observe decorum by contributing directly to the whole, with nothing left dangling or independent. *The Ode to a Nightingale* is less perfect though a greater poem. The distinctive appeal of *To Autumn* lies not merely in the degree of resolution but in the fact that in this short space so many different kinds of resolution are attained.

5. Walsh

We are genius having at its disposal a perfect sensibility. Keats's meditation on maturity, his efforts to achieve it, here issue into a disciplined poetic act, the poem exhibits like the best romantic poems a radically original first hand response to experiences and exhibits it more over with the characteristic Keatsian virtues of density and definition, weight and pressure...

By this time in his carrer, it is clear that ripeness had come to be for Keats both a varied and an ordered concept. It represents a rich fund of experience which had been examined and weighed by a scrupulously just and delicately balanced mind. It is no accident that the ripeness which is the theme of the poem should stand into so close an analogy to the maturity which is the theme of Keats's moral and intellectual life. In this poem maturity is both achieved and transcendent. Keats's poem gives us right to use a dangerous and difficult word. It gives us a sanction for saying that here maturity is transformed into wisdom.

6. David Perkins

Autumn accordingly is described as a season of "mellow fruitfulness." The sun is ripening or "maturing" the earth, "conspiring" to load the vines and bend the apple trees, "to smell the gourd and plump the hazel shells." The season fills "all fruit with ripeness

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to the core" ; and these images of full, inward ripeness and strain suggest that the maturing can go no further, that the fulfilment has reached its climax. Even the cells of the bees are over-brimmed, yet the ripening continues, "budding more and still more later flowers." The bees "think warm days will never cease." Thus through the imagery the poem suggests a prolonging of fulfilment. At the same time, however, there are indirect images of ageing. For the sun is maturing—it is not only ripening the things, but it is also growing older. So also Autumn itself, the closebosom friend of the Sun...

...the objectivity of the last few lines suggests an acceptance which includes even the fact of death. Death is here recognised as something inherent in the course of things, the condition and price of all fulfilment having like the spring and summer of life its own distinctive character or "music" which is also to be prized and relished. In the last analysis, perhaps, the serenity and acceptance here expressed are aesthetic. The ode is after all, a poem of contemplation. The symbol of autumn compels that attitude. The poet's own fears, ambitions and passions are not directly engaged and hence he can be relatively withdrawn. The poem seems to suggest that life in all its stages has a certain identity and beauty which man can appreciate by disengaging his own ego.

7. **Arnold Davenport**

The main point of the poem is the main subject of *Hyperion* in which the glory of the new gods shines out, eclipse the titans, the loss of whose old grandeur is the price that must be paid for the new beauty.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Keats wrote in September, 1819, from Winchester, to Reynolds, "How beautiful the season is now—How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather—Dian skies—I never liked stubble-fields so much as now—Aye better than the chilly green of spring. Somehow a stubble-field looks warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it." That is his Ode, *To Autumn.*

Metre—Eleven iambic lines of five feet or ten syllables with a slight variation of rhyme scheme in the three stanzas.

Stanza I. The bounty or plenty of Autumn in its vegetative aspect.

It is only in line 1, that autumn appears as an abstraction, when autumn is introduced as a season. Even in line 2, autumn is humanised. The language of philosophy is abstract, whereas, poetry, as Milton said, is a sensuous art. Keats does not dwell long in the domain of the abstract.

mellow fruitfulness, ripe fruits, 'fruitfulness' is abstract for concrete, an example of *Synecdoche.*

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close bosom friend, intimate friendship and the ability to conspire are human attributes. The passage illustrates the anthropomorphic faculty of Keats's mind.

maturing sun, the autumnal sun matures all fruits. Autumn and the sun are in collusion with each other. As examples of autumn's bounty, we have here (i) the grape, (ii) the apple, (iii) all ripe fruits, (iv) the gourd, (v) the hazel-nut, (vi) the honey flowers.

the vines..... ..run, the vines straggling round the eves of thatched cottages. Milton calls it "gadding vine." His language is abstract, Keats's language is picturesque. If Keats had not been a poet, he would have been a painter. Note also how Keats is luxuriating in a variety of colours—the golden apples, the emerald moss, the green foliage of the trees growing round the cottages, the grey thatches of the roofs of the cottages.

bend, with the load of apples.

moss, it grows in unfrequented places, it is soft and velvety and emerald in colour.

all fruit, collective singular for all fruits.

swell, the gourd attains its maximum size in autumn.

hazal shells, hazel-nuts are edible, not the shells, which are inflated by the growth of the kernel.

set budding, cause to bud.

later flowers, late summer flowers. Though it is autumn now, late summer flowers are still in bloom.

they think, a sympathetic projection of poetical imagination into the minds of the bees. The kind of sympathy was roused in this period of romantic revival by the poetry of Blake, Burns and Wordsworth. Owing to the inexhaustible store of honey, the bees think that summer is endless.

Summer, personified.

their clammy cells, the cups of flowers are moist and sticky on account of the presence of honey. 'Cells' do not refer to beehives.

Stanza II. The familiar pictures of Autumn.

Who.....store ?" an example of Erotesis or Rhetorical question, a question implying a strong affirmation of the contrary. All must have been excepting those who are entirely devoid of poetical imagination or, artistic sight.

thy store, your abundant store.

The season appears first in the person of a harvester, next as a tired reaper, then as a gleaner, lastly as a cider-market. In these characteristic personifications of autumn, Keats

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again shows the anthromorphic quality of his mind, the faculty which is strongest in ancient Greek and Hindu mythology, which peoples the trees with dryads, seas with nereids.

careless, at ease, *cf.* secure, *Lat.* se cura, without care. The harvester having collected the grains and stored them in a granary, is a picture of perfect contentment. He is sitting cross-legged on the granary floor his hair softly or gently lifted by the wind which separates the chaff from the grain. Such a harvester is a familiar sight of autumn. If you have seen him, you have seen autumn itself.

half-reap'd, the other half waiting to be reaped when the reaper will wake up.

furrow, miniature trench made by the plough. It is along the furrow that corn grows.

sound asleep, the soundness of sleep is caused by (i) physical exhaustion, and (ii) the soporific odour of poppies which grow intertwined with the corns.

Drows'd with, sleep having been induced by.

hook, poetical word for scythe.

swath, tuft or handful or as much as can be taken in by the sweep of the scythe.

twined flowers, poppies entangled with the corn. In ancient Greek mythology, poppy was sacred to Demeter, the goddess of corn.

It is a very human picture that Keats presents, the picture of a tired reaper, fallen asleep on the furrow with the sickle held loosely in his hand.

a gleaner, after the harvest has been gathered, the gleaner, a poor woman, goes to the field and slowly and painfully collects stray sheaves of corn lying in the field. She goes home in the evening with her modest bundle and while crossing a brook she choose her steps cautiously over the stones of the brook and keeps her head steady lest her whole day's labour is washed away by the current. In two lines Keats has presented a picture which is complete and satisfying.

cyder-press, a pressing machine for extracting applewine or cider. The last picture of autumn is that of a cider-maker, an unhackneyed picture.

oozings, falling drop by drop.

hours by hours, for continual hours.

Stanza III. **The music of Autumn.**

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Where are.....they ? This line is not so felicitous as the rest of this complete and perfect ode. In autumn, one need not yearn for the rapturous music of spring. Autumn has its characteristic music too. It is sad mellowed. The ear is as much an inlet of beauty as the eye or any other sense.

While barred clouds.....hue, in lines 3 and 4, Keats supplies the scene or background of autumnal music. The scene being given, the music follows.

barred, clouds drown out in long lines or bars, or stratified clouds, they are illuminated by the rays of the setting sun and they reflect a rosy light on the plains below.

bloom, illumine, by a poetic licence Keats uses the verb transitively.

soft-dying, in autumn, the twilight is long. The day dies slowly but surely like a consumptive. The rosy light of the barred clouds round the setting sun is like the hectic flush on the cheeks of a consumptive. The flush is not a sign of health but of incipient decay. Just so, the twilight glow of an autumnal sky signifies that the day will slowly pass away. These famous lines acquire an added pathos when we remember that Keats himself died of consumption and faced this kind of slow death.

stubble-plains, a characteristic sight of autumn, after the harvesting the stumps of corn are left in the field. The sunset illumines both the sky above and the earth below.

wailful choir, the smarming gnats are buzzing mournfully and weeping as it were over some dead person.

lives or dies, as the gentle wind blows or ceases to blow.

sallows, a species of willows growing on the banks of rivers, brooks and streams. The gnats grow in the proximity of water, the willows providing them with a convenient shelter against the wind.

borne aloft Or sinking, the gnats go up or fall. As the gnats are lifted up by the wind, the buzzing is louder ; as they come down very nearly to the level of the waters, it is subdued.

ful-grown, in autumn the lambs are full-grown.

loud, the lambs bleat loudly because they are full grown. The bleat of lambs is plaintive.

hilly bourn, As daylight begins to fail, the lambs standing on the edge of the hill bleat loudly so as to draw the attention of the shephred in their instinctive desire to get back to their fold before it is too dark. '*bourn*' Fr. borne (a limit) has been made famous by Shakespeare's use of it. *Cf.*

> 'That undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns.' —(*Hemlet* III, i).

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Hedge crickets sing, grass-hoppers chirp. *Cf.*

"a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ;
That is the Grass-hopper's." (*Keats*).

red-breast whistles, the robin or red-breast is a denizen of the orchard and one may hear its treble from the croft or enclosure of the garden or orchard. The whistling is shrill but soft like the voice of children.

gathering swallows, the swallows gather in the autumnal sky towards sunset and exercise their wings in order to make themselves ready for their winter migration.

'Additional interest is lent to this catelogue of sweet sounds by the locality to which each one is attributed. The gnats mourn by the river, the goats bleat from the hill, the grass-hoppers sing in the lane, the robin whistles in the garden and the swallows twitter in the skies.'—(*Downer*).

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8

ODE ON MELANCHOLY

I

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine ;
Nor suffer thy pale forhead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine :
Make not your, rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle nor the death-moth be
Your mournful P'syche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries ;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

II

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies ;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows.
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eye,

III

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die,
And joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu, and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :
Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine,
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ode was inspired by Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* which the poet was reading at the time. Originally it opened with the following stanza,

> Though you should build a bark of dead man's bones,
> And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast
> .....
> .....
> Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull.

However, the stanza was omitted as being out of harmony with the tone of the poem. But the second stanza (now the first) was retained without any change. This explains the abrupt opening the Ode as it stands at present.

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. True melancholy is not to be found in places where it is generally supposed to be. She is not to be found in the underworld or obtained by reflecting on wolf's-bane or nightshade or yew-berries. She is not to be found with such omens of death and destruction, as the owl, the beetle and the death-moth. Contemplation on objects associated with melancholy will only deaden the senses and, "drown the wakeful anguish of the soul".

Stanza 2. When a melancholy fit falls on a person like a shower of rain which nourishes the flowers and makes them bloom, and which shuts from view the green hills around, he should feed his sorrow by the contemplation of such objects of beauty as a blooming rose in the morning, a rainbow, or the beautiful globed peonies, or he should feed his melancholy by looking deep into the beautiful eyes of his beloved when she is in an angry mood, and her anger heightens her beauty. The transitoriness of beauty will give rise to melancholy reflections and the melancholy within him will thus be intensified and nourished. Thus for Keats true melancholy is to be found with Beauty and not with objects commonly associated with sorrow and suffering.

Stanza 3. Melancholy is to be found not in objects which are generally associated with sorrow and suffering, but in all that is beautiful and joy-giving. Beauty and joy are the sources of melancholy, because Beauty is transitory and joy is merely an interlude in the general drama of pain. Melancholy lives close to that intense pleasure which turns to poison as soon as it is tasted. Melancholy has her shrine in the very temple of delight. But this association of melancholy with pleasure and beauty is perceived only by those who can experience the ecstasy of joy. Only such persons can enjoy the heights of melancholy ; only they can appreciate its fine shades.

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CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The Sources of the Poem

The Ode to Melancholy is the last of the odes written in 1819. This Ode was also published in 1820. It was inspired by Beaumont, Milton and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The underlying mood of the poem is now complete sadness, dejection and indecision. In earlier odes like on the 'Urn' and on the 'Nightingale', he had tried to escape for sometime the reality and enjoy beauty. The means to this were self-forgetfulness and absorption in another image. But now Keats does not evade melancholy but prepares himself to face both the aspects of life with complete serenity. This poem, says a woman critic (*Aileen Ward*), carries the meditation of the two preceding odes to its ultimate conclusion.

The Theme of the Poem

Commenting on the theme of the poem *Alieen Ward* writes : "Beyond the awareness that all joy passes all that life brings sorrow insurmountable by joy, this ode explores the thought not only that joy and sorrow are inextricable but that the deepest joys hold the deepest sorrows." Hence "The theme of the ode to Melancholy is the poet's realization that suffering is inevitable and the poet must seek some emotional acceptance of life as it really is. Keats has even elsewhere been asserting occasionally that man must turn to the concrete, experiencing it as fully as possible." (*Harold Bloom*).

The poem recognizes that sadness is the inevitable complement of the moment of intense sensuous happiness :

> She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die
> And joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu.

It is therefore as vain to attempt to escape from this inevitable pain as to expect a light not to cast shadows. Melancholy springs from the transience of joy, and the transience of joy is a part of its nature. But the note of the poem is not 'Gather Ye rosebuds, while ye may'. The idea of impermanence, the noion of human joy as fragile, transient thing the conviction that joy turns to poison the bee-mouth sips—these provide the theme of the ode.

The Development of Thought

The Ode takes its colouring from the personal experience of the poet. He is in a more bitter mood than usual and tells us that Beauty is the eternal source of melancholy. If a man wants to feed fat his sadness, he should not look at things counted sad and gloomy, but at the most beautiful. True melancholy is not to be found in the sad and ugly things of life nor in death and its accompaniments, but in everytning that is beautiful and joyful. The deepest melancholy is to be found in April showers, and the beautiful roses, and bright dark

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eyes of the beloved. When the melancholy fit falls on thee, Oh reader, advises the poet,

> Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
> Or on the rainbow of the salt sand wave,
> Or on the wealth of globed promises,
> Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
> Imprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
> And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

The lines are an expression of the "ache at the heart of felicity, the sense of tears in mortal things, which has haunted poets from Virgil to Herrick and from Herrick to our own day." (*Weekes*).

A man can enjoy melancholy to the fullest, only when he most deeply loves the beautiful, when he uses his capacities of joy to the fullest. If he does not feel so much joy, he would not suffer so much and his grief would not be so bitter ; if he does not love Beauty so much, he would not feel so much when it is gone. This is so because

> .....in the very Temple of Delight
> Veiled Melancholy has her Sovran shrine

and because

> She (Melancholy) dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die
> And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding adieu.

Sensuousness

The poem is remarkable for its sensuousness. For example, see the following lines :

> Or, if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
> Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
> And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

The Profound Perception

Robert Bridges praises the perception in this ode. Melancholy is most deeply felt by the organization most capable of joy. According to *Robert Bridges*, "The paradox that melancholy is most deeply felt by the organization most capable of joy is clinched at the end of the observation of the reaction which satiety provokes in such temperaments, so that it is also in the moment of extremest joy that it suddenly fades,

> "Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips."

Language and Versification

W. J. Bate says that this poem matches the *Nightingale* and the *Grecian Urn* odes in restrained intensity of language and versification. Each stanza of ten iambic pentameter lines consists of a quatrain of alternate rhymes and a sestet rhyming c d e, c d e. The poem is remarkable for its easy and magnificent style.

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Imagery

The poem is bereft of the symbolism found in the *Nightingale* and the *Grecian Urn* odes. But the imagery is vivid and bright. Graphic pictures are available. e.g.

(1) Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand move.

(2) Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips.

(3) Aye, in very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine...

"The images of the poem are in harmony with the mood of the poem. In the first stanza the "death moth" as a mournful psyche, the "rosary of yew-berries" or the poisonous wine are also approximate equivalents to the downy owl. They are images related with Melancholy."

(*Harold Bloom*).

According to *Miss Aileen Ward*, "Joys' grape—the sour-sweet fruit—is the final taste of life and the conclusive image of the odes ; a poignant beauty achieved through a palpable act of possession in which taste and touch, the most intimate of the means of sensuous discovery, unite in the final conquest. Yet at this moment of symbolic achievement, the flush of exultation chills and the poet finds himself face to face with a mysterious veiled figure waiting at the centre of his experience. Like the young Apollo at Muemosyne's approach, he does not recognize her at first, he knows only that there is "purport in her looks for him." Of a revelation still to come, some final experience of her might. And so the odes, like the month which produced them, and on a note of troubled foreboding."

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

This is the last of the Odes in the 1820 volume.

Metre—Each stanza of ten iambic pentameter lines, consists of a quatrain of alternate rhymes and a sestet rhyming c d e, c d e.

Stanza I. Melancholy is a delicate feeling, not deadening grief caused by death or disaster.

No, no.....Lethe, the abrupt beginning is explained by the rejection of the opening stanza in the original version. Keats had been reading Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* about this time and was much impressed by its fantastic and forcible images, whose influence is traceable in the following lines which he finally omitted :

'Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones
And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,
Stitch shrouds together for a sail, with groans
To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast :
Although your rudder be a dragon's tail
Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,

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Your cordage large uprootings from the skull
Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy—whether she
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull...

Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. Melancholy is not to be found on the shores of Lethe, the water of which the spirits of the dead had to drink to obtain forgetfulness.

neither twist Wolf's-bane, the effect of melancholy is not to be destroyed by an antidote. Wolf's-bane is an emblem of sombre depression. Twisting is required for tearing up its roots and for extracting its poisonous juice.

nightshade, yields red bright berries favoured by Proserpine. *cf.* Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV.

'Not that fair field
Of Enna, where Proserpine gathering flowers
Herself a fairer flower by gloomy Dis (Pluto)
Was gathered.'

Nor suffer.....Proserpine, melancholy is not to be sustained by thoughts of death and of the nether-world governed by Pluto and his Queen.

rosary, string of 165 beads; the lesser of 55.

yew, the yew is associated with graveyards, 'a dark funereal-looking tree.'

Make.....berries, do not betake yourself to melancholy prayers.

beettle, it has a melancholy drone.

Psyche, moth with butterfly wings. Psyche as beloved of Eros or Cupid was represented with butterfly wings in Greek mythology.

owl, a bird of ill omen.

too drowsily, where there is no contrast the feeling will be benumbed. The feeling caused by death or calamities is deadening grief, not melancholy, which according to Keats, should mean conscious enjoyment of a sorrowful feeling inevitably associated with everything that is beautiful and joyful.

Stanza II. Melancholy of love and vanishing things.

fit shall fall Sudden, visitation of the melancholy mood is sudden like the vernal showers.

a weeping cloud, pouring rain.

fosters.....all, *cf.* Shelly,

vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,'

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Drooping flowers are sustained by the spring showers.

April shroud, a shroud of April rain. The word 'shroud' lends a touch of mystery and sadness.

glut, indulge to the full.

a morning rose, the morning rose in spring after a shower is beautiful but its beauty will fade away.

rainbow.....sand wave, prismatic colours of the rainbow on the sandy beach left wet by a retreating wave. The rainbow occasionally appears after a shower. Its iridescent colours and their charming reflection will last only for a short while.

wealth, abundant flowers.

globed peonies, plants with large globular red or white flowers.

some rich anger, some fervent emotion or passion.

rave, under the influence of some intense passion.

peerless eyes, the eyes acquire an incomparable lustre under the stress of the strong feeling. The passion and the lustre are both short-lasting.

Stanza III. The pleasure that is in sorrow can only be felt by those who are exceedingly happy.

She, Melancholy is personified here.

with beauty, perception of the transitory character of beauty, the beauty of the lustrous eyes of youth, the beauty of the human form, the beauty of the verdurous' forest, will awaken the melancholy mood in sensitive souls.

Joy.....adieu, like Beauty above, Joy is also personified. The picture of Joy is very graphic. The attitude of joy is not that of welcome, but of farewell. When lovers and friends meet, there is real happiness, but we know that it will not last. The joy of every union is mixed with the pangs of separation, which is latent in union. So the melancholy of melancholies is that of beauty that must fade, of joy that must pass away.

aching Pleasure.....poison, the heart aches when pleasure is exessive. Satiety and disappointment, however, attend indulgence. Satiety causes a sad feeling. Pleasure thus turns almost to poison owing the feeling disillusionment and disgust which inevitably follows gratification. The pleasure is in the pursuit not in the attainment or in the consummation of an ideal.

the bee-mouth sips, man is compared to the bee which sucks honey with great avidity. Just so man, indulges in pleasure.

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with gusto empties the opiate of pleasure 'to the drains,' but the drains or dregs are bitter.

veil'd Melancholy, the face of the goddess Melancholy is hidden from dull souls.

sovran shrine, dominating shrine. Melancholy dominates delight. She dwells in the sanctum sanctorum and reveals her face only to those, who are capable of experiencing the acme of pleasure.

save, excepting.

strenuous tongue, it is only a vigorous pursuit of pleasure which will lead to the realisation of the profundities of melancholy.

palate fine, one must have an exquisitely sensitive palate. Note how the sense of touch contributes to the perception of knowledge.

the sadness of her might, the power of her sadness.

cloudy trophies, supersensitive souls are the trophies won by Melancholy. The souls of melancholy people are likened to clouds which are hung as trophies in the shrine of the goddess, the clouds suggesting the gloom of despondency and dejection, which we feel in moments of great joy and happiness.

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9

LINES ON SEEING A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR

Chief of organic numbers !
Old Scholar of the Spheres !
Thy spirit never slumbers,
But rolls about our ears,
For ever, and for ever !
O, what a mad endeavour
Worketh he,
Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
And melody,
How heavenward thou soundest
Live Temple of sweet noise,
And Discord unconfoundest,
Giving Delight new joys,
And Pleasure nobler pinions !
O, where are thy dominions ?
Lend thine ear
To a young Delian oath,—aye, by thy soul,
By all that from thy mortal lips did roll,
And by the kernal of thine earthly love,
Beauty, in things on earth and things above,
I swear !
When every childish fashion
Has vanished from my rhyme,
Will I, grey-gone in passion
Leave to an after-time
Hymning and Harmony
Of thee, and of thy works, and of thy life ;
But vain is now the burning and the strife ;
Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife ;
With old Philosophy,
And mad with glimpses of futurity !
For many years my offerings must be hush'd ;
When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,
Because I feel my forehead hot and flushed,
Even at the simplest vassal of thy power,—
A lock of thy bright hair,—
Sudden it came,

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And I was startled when I caught thy name
Coupled so unaware ;
Yet, at the moment, temperate was my blood,
I thought I had beheld it from the flood. 40

PARAPHRASE

Lines 1-10. Milton is the mighty mouthed inventor of harmonies. He is the god-gifted voice of England. He is the chief writer of harmonious verse. He is the scholar of the Spheres probably because the scene of Milton's great epic is laid partly in heaven and hell, that is, above or below our earth. Milton had adapted Ptolemaic conception of the universe for his epic, *Paradise Lost*. The poetic spirit of Milton always rings in our ears. It never sleeps. It is immortal. It would be audacious on the part of any one who should try to write about the exalted character of Milton's genius.

Lines 11-16. Keats in his invocation to Milton says that he (Milton) raises his song to heaven. Urania, the epic Muse had led Milton, an earthly guest, to the heaven of heavens. He is a living shelter of sweet music. He blends discords into harmony. By the magic of his poetry he makes things happy, more joyous, and gives wings to pleasures. By the help of imagination he makes his verse a thing of pleasure. The poet asks where Milton lives now after death.

Lines 17-32. Keats requests Milton to listen to him because he is going to make a solemn declaration. By all that Milton wrote, by the love he had for the earth, and for beauty, both material and heavenly, Keats pledges that he shall write about the great poet's life and his poetry. But Keats will write about Milton only when he shakes off his immaturity. He will write about the poetry and melody of Milton when childish fashion (immaturity) vanishes from his poetry, and the impetuosity of youth has worn itself out. But at present there is no sense in burning the mid-night oil, in taking pains for writing about Milton, his work and his life. When Keats becomes mature in thought and expression, and when he filled and inspired by the exalted ideas of philosophy, he shall write a harmonious hymn in honour of Milton's life and his sublime poetry. He will not write till he becomes a seer and has prophetic visions of future.

Lines 33-42. For many years Keats will remain silent. He shall not write till he grows mature. But whenever the poet shall begin writing about Milton, he shall remember this occasion when he saw a lock of his hair. At present the poet is hot and flushed with emotions at seeing even the trifle like the lock that is Milton's. He saw the lock all of a sudden and was simply stunned to know that an object like a lock seemingly common place was linked with Milton. However at this moment Keats was cool and temperate. He felt as if he had seen the lock from the earliest time. Here there seems to be a contradiction. Only six lines before he has told that his head was hot and flushed.

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CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Occasion of the Poem

In a letter to Bailey (Jan. 23, 1818) Keats explains how this Ode came to be written : "I was at Hunt's the other day and he surprised me with a real authenticated lock of Milton's hair. I know you would like what I wrote there on, so here it is as they say of a Sheep in a nursery book."

In the Hunt's Note book the finest seventeen lines of this Ode are found inscribed in Keat's writing with a note by Hunt saying : "A solemn pledge by the poet to write a hymn on Milton's life and works which was never fulfilled due to the immature death of the poet."

In this Ode, which is addressed to Milton, Keats, after acknowledging the rashness of an attempt to eulogise the genius of the poet, registers an oath that later on, when more mature in thought, he will write a hymn in celebration of Milton's work and life. The pledge was not carried out because of Keats's immature, early death.

The Subject Matter of the Poem

Lines (1-10) Milton is the chief among the writers of harmonious verse. He is a scholar of the Spheres because the scene of his *Paradise Lost* is laid partly in heaven and hell. His poetic spirit never sleeps. It is immortal. It is audacious on the part of any one who dares an attempt to write on the life and poetry of Milton.

Lines 11-16. The poetry of Milton sounds of heaven. He wrote about heaven. He is musical and blends discords into harmony. He turns unmusical sounds into musical ones. Where does he live now after death.

Lines 17-32. The poet takes an oath that when he leaves childish fashion and becomes highly ripe with wisdom he shall write about the life and works of Milton.

Lines 33-43. For many years the poet shall not write anything about Milton. But when he shall begin writing he shall remember occasion of seeing his lock. At present the poet is too emotional to write anything, at seeing any trifle that is Milton's. It was all of a sudden that he saw his bright hair. Keats was startled to find his name so unexpectedly linked with an object seemingly common-place. Yet at that moment he was temperate. He thought as if he had seen the hair from the earliest days.

The Chief Interest

The Chief interest of the poem lies in three things—(a) study of Keats's mind at the time he wrote this ode, (b) Milton's influence on Keats, and (c) tribute to Milton's poetry. This is the view of A. R. Weekes.

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NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Leigh Hunt had surprised Keats by showing him "a real authenticated lock of Milton's hair", which inspired this tributary ode. He sent this Ode to Bailey on January 23, 1818 with the following remark, "This I did at Hunt's at his request—perhaps I should have done something better alone and at home."

Stanza I. An invocation.

organic numbers ! harmonious verse, *cf.* Tennyson,

> 'O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
> Goe-gifted organ-voice of England,
> Milton, a name to resound for ages.'

spheres ! Milton had adopted the Ptolemaic conception of the universe for his epic, *Paradise Lost*. According to Ptolemy, the earth was fixed, and the sun, moon and other planets, with the fixed stars were set in a series of hollow revolving solid spheres.

he, Keats or any other poet who would be bold enough to offer homage to Milton in verse.

sacred and ennobled hearse, sublime and exalted character of his epical genius, *hearse*, literally meaning the car for carrying coffin at funeral.

burnt.....melody, melodious verses are compared to incense, which is burnt when a deity is worshipped.

Stanza II. The poet's solemn asseveration.

How soundest, Urania, the epic Muse had led Milton, an earthly guest, to the heaven of heavens.

Live, living, full of power and energy, *cf.* the cancelled draft, 'O living Fane of Sounds'.

Discord unconfoundest, you blend discords into harmony, out of discords you evolve concord.

pinious, for soaring into the highest empyrean.

Delian oath, the oath of a poet ; Delos, an island in the Aegean, was the birthplace of Artemis and Apollo, the god of poetry.

the kernel.....above, by that which you loved most on earth and in heaven.

Stanza III. When he becomes mature in thought, he will write a harmonious hymn in honour of Milton's life and exalted poetry.

When every...rhyme, Keats with his critical mind was acutely conscious of the imperfection of his poetical powers. For

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a similar sentiment, compare the following lines from Milton's *Lycidas* :

'And with forc'd fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.'

grey-gone impassion, the tumultuous passions of life make us not only physically older but sadder and wiser too. *Cf.* the following lines from Keat's *Sonnet on sitting down to read King Lear once again* :

"for once again, the fierce dispute
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
Must I burn through.'

an after-time, the future ; Keats, however, could never fulfil the pledge, owing to his death after three years.

grow high-rife.....Philosophy, till my mind is filled and inspired by the exalted ideas of philosophy. 'Old', not merely ancient but also effecting maturity of thought. Compare a similar sentiment in Milton's *Il Penseroso* :

'Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.'

of futurity, of life eternal beyond death.

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10

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA, WRITTEN ON MAY DAY, 1818

Mother of Hermes and still youthful Maia !
May I sing to thee
As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiae ?
Or may I woo thee
In earlier Sicilian ? Or thy smiles
Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan ?
O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span
Of heaven and few ears,
Rounded by thee, my song should die away
Content as theirs,
Rich in the simple worship of a day.

PARAPHRASE

The poet invokes the goddess Maia who was the mother of Hermes, the god of eloquence, music and songs. By virtue of being mother of Hermes, the poet regards her as repository of the resources of poetry. He calls her eternally youthful—"still youthful Maia". For, to Keats, the spirit of poetry was ever youthful.

The poet prays to the goddess to be allowed to sing to her songs of praise and joy so that he may derive from her fertility of imagination, vitality of poetic expression, and relish himself the joy of creation. At the famous places in the past, "the shores of Baiae, or in Sicily of earlier time, or in Grecian island" poets and musicians worshipped goddess Maia and derived power from her blessings.

Keats supplicates the goddess Maia to grant him the vigour of those old classical poets of whom Homer was the greatest. Even if he could sing about the beauty of the quiet primrose flower of May and celebrate the sensuous pleasures of a day in a song which might die away, he would surely be content.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Ode to Maia, evidently, is not one of Keat's great odes. Nor could it be regarded as even a minor one. It is one of his fragments unfinished poems. Some of these fragments he assimilated later on,

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into his longer works, but the fragment, Ode to Maia, remains a piece of curiosity by itself. Keats is known to have written it in early 1818 only after a year and a half of his discovery of the world of wonderous charms of Greek myths in Chapman's translation of Homer. The poem shows how deeply was Keats's imagination stirred by the mythical figures of Greek loves.

Every ode is a form of invocation, but Ode to Maia is a pure invocation of Maia, the mother, the origin of Hermes, the personified song, music and poetry, to grant Keats the vitality and vigour of the old classical poets of Greece and Rome. He would be satisfied with singing song in praise of the goddess, Maia, as personified in "the quier Primrose" of May, with celebrating the rich sensuous joys of a single day in spring.

The poem is romantic in experience and substance. The yearning for the lost glory of the old classical poets is illustrative of the poet's nostalgia of the past. His fancy dotes upon the legendary charms of Baiae and Sicily and the ancient Greek isles. The second half of the poem beginning, "O, give me their old Vigour..." forms a contrast in so far as it celebrates the rich but "the simple worship of a day," but, for all that, it is no less romantic than the first part wherein fancy roams in the distant past. The image of "the quiet Primrose" reveals the poets' capacity of summing up romantic beauty in a phrase.

In execution of the experience, however, the poem is undoubtedly an exercise in classical restraint.

This beautiful little fragment of an Ode, says *Weekes*, is on the highest level of Keats' workmanship. It was enclosed in a letter to *Reynolds*, sent on May 3rd, 1898. After writing of his desire to gain knowledge of every sort, Keats tell Reynolds : "It is impossible to know how far knowledge will console us for the death of a friend, and the ills 'that flesh is heir to'. With respect to the affections and poverty, you must know by sympathy my thoughts that way, and I dare say these few lines will be, but a ratification. I wrote them on May-day—and intend to finish the Ode all in good time."

This fragment, says *Mr. de Selincourt*, "blends with subtle art two sources of the Poet's happiest inspiration—the spirit of Greece as he understood it, and the peaceful beauty of Nature." The ode is also remarkable for the exquisite use of the commonest words. The felicity of expression of such lines as, "leaving great verse unto a little clan" is noteworthy.

The Legend of Maia

Maia, the mother of Hermes or Mercury by Jupiter, was with her six sisters raised to the dignity of a constellation, that of the Pleiades, which rises in the spring. The Romans regarded their month of May as named after her, and hence Keats addresses to her this Ode, fittingly composed on May-day i.e. the first of May.

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The Development of Ideas

Maia is the mother of Hermes. She has bubbling youth. The poet sings of her as she was sung by the Roman pastoral poets. Theocritus and ancient Greek poets like Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar. The poet, again like the Roman and Greek poets is content with fit audience though few. He begs from Maia, the vigour of the old days. Like the ancient Greek poets he is contented with the simple admiration of unsophisticated hearts and does not care for the clamour of the modern world.

Mythical References

Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia (the daughter of Atlas and was born in a cave of Mount Cyllene in Arcadia. Maia was the daughter of Atlas and Pleione. She was the eldest of what is known as Pleiades, a group of seven beautiful sisters, of whom Maia was most charming. The Lord of the Greek gods, Zeus made love to her in a grotto of Mt. Cyllene in Aradia, and she conceived and latter gave birth to Hermes. In Roman mythology, Maia is known as the goddess of spring.

The Greek Spirit of the Poem

Keats was a Greek in spirit. He imported Greek myths into his poems. *The Ode to Maia* is his greatest Greek poem in the sense that he addresses Maia, the symbol of spring, and begs from her to sing of her after the Greek fashion. The poet has truly sought the spirit of the Greek poetry, its strength, sweetness, simplicity, and above all the freshness of life. He says :—

> Mother of Hermes ! and still youthful Maia !
> May I sing to thee
> As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiae ?
> Or may I woo thee
> In earlier Sicilian ?

This poem, as mentioned by Selincout, blends with subtle art two sources of the poet's happiest inspiration : the spirit of Greece as he understood it, and the peaceful beauty of Nature. And, as is often the case, the whole essence of the poem has to pass into the exquisite use of the commonest words. The word 'old' is rarely used by Keats without some sense of yearning after the beauty and the glory of primeval life.

Metre

The unique stanza, an invention of Keats, begins with a quatrain of alternate rhymes, which is followed by a couplet. Two more quatrains of the same rhyme pattern follow and conclude the stanza, Lines 2, 4, 11 and 13 have only two accents, the rest have five.

Conclusion

Edmund Blunde admires this poem saying : "He (Keats) only finished the first movement of an Ode to May, but it has serene

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strength and promises of great verse." *Douglas Bush* says, "The initial literary impulse for the *Ode to Maia* may have come from Bernabe Barne's Ode, "Lovely Maya," but Keats is not writing here like an Elizabethan or like his earlier self, for a mere lush and uneven handling of a similar theme one might compare the dedication of the 1817 volume. Instead of the exuberant cataloge of nature and myth and the Wordsworthian symbolism of the *Hymn to Pan*, the *Ode to a Maia* is content with the quite primrose and simple worship of a day. The poem is as Greek in its sober simplicity of expression as it is Un-Greek in its pure romantic nostalgia. And it takes its place among Keats's affirmation on the side of the senses."

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

On May 3, 1818, it was enclosed in a letter to his friend John Hamilton Reynolds and he intended to finish it 'all in good time', but it remains a fragment. Though a fragment, it is complete in itself and very satisfying.

Metre—The unique stanza, an invention of Keats, begins with a quatrain of alternate rhymes, which is followed by a couplet. Two more quatrains of the same rhyme pattern follow and conclude the stanza. Lines 2, 4, 11 and 13 have only two accents, the rest five.

The fragment or the single stanza recaptures the spirit of ancient Greek poetry and expresses the poet's eagar desire to attain the Greek ideal of strength and sweetness in his poetry.

Hermes, son of Zeus and Maia, identified by the Romans with mercury. He was the messenger of the gods and it represented with wings on his sandals.

youthful Maia, daughter of Atlas and mother of Hermes; she was thought by some to be an earth goddess, to whom sacrifices were offered in the month of May, the name of which is perhaps derived from her. She is hardly distinguishable from Fauna. As the whole earth is reborn in spring, she is still youthful. She is the most luminous of the Pleiades, whose rising in the morning marked the beginning of summer. Their morning setting marked the beginning of winter.

Baiae, favourite seaside resort of the ancient Romans, now in ruins, which are mostly submerged in the Mediterranean.

As thou wast, Keats is referring generally to Latin lyric verse in praise of Maia, of spring and May-day festivities.

earlier Sicilian. Theocritus the earliest of Greek pastoral poets (about 270 B. C.) was a Sicilian, who wrote in the local Doric dialect. His followers, Bion and Moschus, also wrote short pastoral pieces.

Sward, turf, expanse covered with short grass. No statues, monuments or mausoleums were erected in their honour

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and they were happy to die unnoticed in their rural surroundings.

great verse.....clan, the ancient Greek poets like Homer, Hesiod and Pindar wrote in the Greek dialect with which they or the few people of their clan were most familiar and did not care of publicity in a wider world. Contrast the modern poets who insist on simultaneous publication of their works which they consider important in the chief cities of the world.

great verse, such as *The Iliad* of Homer, the lyrics of Pindar, *Theogony* of Hesiod, the dramas of the age of Pericles.

old vigour, vigorous stirrings of their intellectual old poetical life. "The epithet, 'old' is rarely used by Keats without some sense of yearning after the beauty and glory of primeval life."

Save of, excepting by.

Save of.....Primrose, the ancient Greek Poets sang as it were to the spring flowers which surrounded them.

the span.....ears, object of 'give me' of the previous line.

span of heaven, as compared with eternity, our life is nothing but a span. Owing to divine inspiration, great poets live a heavenly life here on earth.

few ears.....thee, the ears of the few listeners should be made perfect by Maia : *cf.* Milton's 'fit audience find, though few'—(*Paradise Lost, VII*). Keats desires to leave his song to the few who in an unappreciating age could appreciate it.

Rich.....a day, the silent and simple homage which a few listeners paid to a Valmiki or a Homer is really more valuable than the clamour of the modern world. Greek poets and sages in ancient times were quite contented with the simple admiration of unsophisticated hearts and did not care to be a 'big noise' in the world. It was, however, Keats's fate not to have any appreciative audience while he lived, though his poetry brought him immortal honour after death. He is thus one of 'the inheritors to unfulfilled renown.'

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11
ODE ON INDOLENCE

"They toil not, neither do they spin."

I

One morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced;
They pass'd like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again; as, when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return;
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

II

How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?
How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?
Was it a silent deep disguised plot
To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:
O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

III

A third time pass'd they by, and passing, turn'd
Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faced, and to follow them I burn'd
And ached for wings, because I knew the three;
The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;
The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
I knew to be my demon Poesy.

IV

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:
O folly! What is love? and where is it?

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And for that poor Ambition ! it springs
From a man's little heart's short fever-fit
For Poesy ! —no,—she has not a joy,—
Atleast for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons.
And evenings steep'd in honied indolence ;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense !

V

And once more came they by ;—alas ! wherefore ?
My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams ;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
With flowers, and stirrings shades, and baffled beams ;
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May ;
The open casement press'd a new-leav'd vine ;
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay ;
O Shadows ! 'twas a time to bid farewell !
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

VI

So, ye three Ghost, adieu ! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass ;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce !
Fade soffy from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn ;
Farewell ! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store ;
Vanish, ye Phantoms ! from my idle spright,
Into the clouds, and never more return !

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. One morning the poet was reclining indolently, half-sleep. It seemed to him that three figures passed and re-passed before his eyes. They were like figures carved on a marble urn. They were wearing white robes and sandals. The poet could not recognise them.

Stanza 2. The poet asks the three shadowy figures why they came to him in such a close disguise that he could not recognise them. Had they any secret plan to go away quietly and leave him idle without any work ? It was the time of noon, and the heat of the summer season made the poet drowsy and indolent. He was in that blissful mood when one is insensible alike to pain and pleasure. The poet wanted to enjoy this vacant state, the state of absolute lethargy, and wished that the three figures had not come to disturb his rest.

Stanza 3. The three vague figures again passed by, and this time they looked towards the poet for a moment. The poet at once

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recognised them, and was eager to follow them. One of them was the fair maid called *Love*, the other was *Ambition* with pale cheeks and watchful eyes and the third one was *Poetry* whom the poet loved most of all.

Stanza 4. The three figures seen by the poet disappeared, and he could not follow them for he had no wings. He felt sad, but after a moment's thought he realised his folly. It is a folly to yearn for love, for it does not exist in this world. Ambition, it is nothing but the agitation of a fevered brain. It is a mere deception. No doubt the poet loved poetry, but it, too, brings no joy. At least it is not so sweet as rest on drowsy noons or indolent evenings. The poet wants to pass his life undisturbed by the fever and fret of the world. He does not want to listen to the worldly-wise people who will advise him to be active and hardworking.

Stanza 5. The three figures return again for the fourth time, and the poet asks them why they come to him again and again to disturb his rest. The poet was enjoying a sweet sleep with pleasant dreams. It was pleasant as the spring was near. The morning was cloudy, and though there was no rain, the air smelled of coming rain. The increasing warmth of the season and the song of the thrush came in through the open window. The poet, reclining in complete indolence, does not want to be drawn into the weary strife of life which will bring him nothing but sorrow and suffering. He, therefore, wishes the three figures farewell, and bids them be gone.

Stanza 6. The poet who had been momentarily charmed by Love, Ambition and Poetry, now realises his folly. So he bids farewell to the three ghostly figures. He will not give up his repose on the cool flowery grass. He will enjoy his rest and care no more for hollow hame and fame or for the worthless applause of the people. So he asks the figures to go away from him and be once again the figures carved on a Greek urn. He has enough of sweet dreams for day and night and he will enjoy them to his fill. They should never again return to disturb him.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date and Occasion of the Poem

The great odes of Keats, the odes that make his name immortal, except the *Ode to Autumn*, were all written in the spring of 1819, the Ode on Indolence being probably the first of these 1819 odes. "Those on Psyche and the Grecian Urn", says Sidney Colvin, "are inspired by the old Greek world of imagination and art ;.....those on Melancholy and the Nightingale, by moods of the poet's own mind ; while the fifth, that on Indolence, partakes in a weaker degree of both inspirations."

The Mood & Background

The *Ode on Indolence* is a perfect expression of a mood of absolute lethargy. The poet imagines himself lying on a lawn half-

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asleep in a mood of supremely careless indolence. "He was in that state of effeminacy in which the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body." The activity of the mind as well as of the body was suspended for the moment and he was indifferent to both pain and pleasure :

> Ripe was the drowsy hour :
> The blissful cloud of summer indolence,
> Benumb'd my eyes ; my pulse grew less and less ;
> Pain had no stings, and pleasure's wreath no flower.

In such a mood the poet dreams. Love, Ambition, and Poetry appear as ghostly or masque-like figures on a dreamy urn.

Keats wrote to a friend in the summer of 1819 : "You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year is my writing an *Ode on Indolence*. I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing both from the over powering idea of our dead poets and from the abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of philosopher that I was, consequently a little less of a versifying pet lamb."

He wrote another letter to his brother George on March 19, 1819, : "This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless. I slept long after a stanza or two of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, my passions are all asleep, from having slumbered till nearly eleven, and weakend the animal fibre all over me, to a delighful sensation about three degrees on the side of faintness. If I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lilies, I should call it languour, but as I am, I call it laziness. In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show or enticement and pain on unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me ; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase—a man and two woman—whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering the mind."

The image struck him as he looked at it again and he worked it out in the Ode on Indolence. *Aileen Ward* writes : "His original idea had cooled for almost two months and could no longer give vital shape to the poem or significance to the allegorical figures who merely appear and reappear in a vain effort to rouse from his day dreaming and the conclusion in which he dismisses Love and Poetry as well as Ambition, seems to ring false to his change of mood in the interval".

The Development of Thought in the Poem

Keats imagines himself lying on a lawn half asleep ; there appear before his eyes three figures, which pass and repass as if they were carved on the sides of an urn which is being slowly turned round. Twice they move by him ; and he does not recognize them, so deep

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is he sunk in indolent quiet, the third time they turn their heads, and he knows them to be Love, Ambition, and Poesy : or the worship of art. The sight of them wakes the drowsy watcher to a moment's restlessness ; he wants wings to follow them. But he checks himself, and when they return, the fourth time he bids them be gone. He loves indolence better than ambition, or passion, or even the artist's creative energy. Reluctant to face the labour and strife to which they call him, he sinks back and relapses into dreams, of which he has an ample store.

Sensuousness of the Poem

According to *A. R. Weekes*, this Ode represents one side of Keats's genius—its sensuous, dreamy, pleasured-loving elements. He loves indolence better than ambition or passion, or even the artistic creation. He tells them that they have no power at the time to raise his "head cool-bedded in the flowery grass." They call him to action, to a life of labour and strife, but he would prefer to lie indolently and enjoy, both by day and night, happy dreams of which he has an ample store :

> Farewell ! I yet have visions for the night,
> And for the day faint visions there is store.

He, therefore, wishes the phantoms to vanish from his idle spirit and never to return again.

Keats lived for a life of sensations rather than of thought. And it is this love of the sensuous that the ode expresses. The poet enjoys not only the mood of perfect lethargy, "honied indolence" as he calls it, but also the beauty of nature :

> My soul has been a lawn besprinkle'd over,
> With flowers, and stirring shades and beffled beams.

The Imagery and the Pictorial Quality of the Poem

The exquisite, delicate nature-imagery of the following lines needs no comment. It is a picture in itself ;

> The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
> Though in her lids hung the sweet tears of May.

"It is a lovely metaphorical painting," explains *Weekes*, "of those soft cloudy days of spring and early summer, when the air smells of coming rain." Its rich phrases like "side-faced", "summer-indolence", "honied indolence", "stirring shades" and "baffled beams" speak of the beauty of its images. Just mark the image and expression which have a Shakespearean felicity :

> "My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams"

Or

> "My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er with

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Conclusion

The Ode to Indolence expresses the chief features of Keats's later odes—their music and melody, their word-pictures and well-chiselled language, their under-current of melancholy, their sensuousness and their pictorial quality. According to Weekes, "Beautiful as it is in places, it falls short of their (odes') level of workmanship. It is noble verse, but not Keats at his noblest." The poem is the illustration of the Negative Capability. Neither Love, nor Ambition, nor Poesy makes it worthwhile to give up the luxurious enjoyment to the moment. None of them is :

So sweet as drowsy noons,
And evening steep'd in honied indolence.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

"They toil not, neither do they spin."

This ode was composed in 1819. Earlier he had written to a friend, "This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless.....In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body and to such a degree that pleasure has no show of excitement, and pain no unbearable power. Neither Poetry nor Ambition nor Love has any alertness of countenance as they pass by me ; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase—a man and two women, no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement."

This kind of indolence and supreme carelessness may quite often overcome people and in the case of Keats, his growing debility might have contributed to it. In this ode, he surrenders himself to the dreams caused by physical and mental lassitude. It should, however, be remembered that the mood was purely temporary. The same mood is reflected in Spenser's description of the 'Idle Lake' and the 'Bower of Bliss'. *Cf.*

"Trees, branches, birds, and songs fit
For to allure fraile mind to careless ease."

(*F. Q.* II. vi. 13). Spenser also influenced Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* and Tennyson's *Lotos-Eaters*.

Metre—Ten iambic pentameter lines divisible into a quatrain of alternate rhymes and a sestet introducing two more rhymes.

"They toil not, neither do they spin."—Matthew, VI, 28). 'And why take ye thought for raimen ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin,' *Cf.* Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, II. vi. 17 :

'Why then dost thou, O man, that of them all
Art Lord, and eke of nature Soveraine,
Wilfully make the selfe a wretched thrall,
And waste thy joyous houres in needlesse paine,
Seeking for daunger and adventures vaine ?"

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Stanza I. Three figures appear before his dreamy eyes, they pass and repass like figures on an urn which is slowly turned round.

bowed necks, their heads bent, making recognition difficult.

side-faced, their profile only could be seen.

shades, shadowy figures.

they were strange.....lore, Phidian lore is the art of sculpture, Phidias being a Greek sculptor of the fifth century B.C. The characters depicted on a Grecian urn are many and various, not easily recognised even by devoted students of Greek sculpture.

Stanza II. A happy, indolent and narcotic state of the body and listlessness of the mind :

muffled, disguised.

hush, quiet.

Was it a.....days ? The visions of the night and the fainter visions of the day as mentioned in the closing stanza of the ode are tasks or rituals proper to luxuriating in indolence. The poet suspects that the shadowy figures had deliberately disguised themselves so as to join in a secret plot to shatter the visions so dear to his mood of indolence.

Ripe, it was noon when one feels most drowsy in summer.

Benumb'd, deadened the sensibility of the eyes.

no sting, no 'unbearable frown'.

Pleasure's.....flower, pleasure had no attraction for me.

melt, dissolve into nothing.

leave my.....nothingness, leave my mind quite blank and conscious of nothing excepting its own vacuity.

Stanza III. When the figures pass the third time, he recognises them to be Love, Ambition and Poesy.

ach'd for wings, sudden recognition of the three figures fills him with a keen desire to chase them, that is, the poet's pleasant mood of dreamful indolence is rudely disturbed for a while.

The first.....name, the infinite charms of Love are indicated by the epithet 'fair'.

pale of cheek, to realise ambition, one has to 'scorn delights and live laborious days,' hence pallid cheeks, perpetual vigilance and indefatigable industry are the fitting attributes of Ambition. Note in this connection the closing lines of Keats's *The Terror of Death.*

"Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love.....
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink."

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and Shelley's well-known lines in *An Exhortation,*

"Chameleons feed on light and air
Poet's food is love and fame."

the more of blame, an allusion to the scurrilous and unreasoned attacks which had appeared in *Black-wood's Magazine* or *The Quarterly Review.*

most unmeek, his creative energy is irrepressible.

demon Poesy, Poesy fills him with a demoniacal frenzy, which does not yield to the animadversions of hostile and unsympathetic critics. He loves her hostile and unsympathetic critics. He loves her all the more for the unreasoned attacks as he writes in one of his letters, "Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works... and also, when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary repercussion and ratification of what is fine."

Stanza IV. He is filled with a momentary desire to pursue them but in a moment he realises the folly of it all.

forsooth, an archaism for 'indeed'.

I wanted wings, refers to a momentary craving for pursuing them.

Where is it ? *Cf. Ode to a Nightingale* :

"Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes.
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow."

short fever-fit, ambition proceeds from a brief turmoil caused by the petty passions or desires of the heart. *Cf.* "The weariness, the fever and the fret."—(*Ode to a Nightingale*).

drowsy, sleep-inducing.

shelter'd from annoy, free from the petty annoyances or vaxations of life.

how change the moons, how time passes or how seasonal changes take place.

busy common-sense, fussy wisdom of the world.

Stanza V. The figures appear for the fourth time but he loves indolence better and remains unmoved by them.

embroider'd with dim dreams, dreams are the soft beauties or delicate embroidery of slumber.

stirring shades.....beams, flickering of light and shade in a garden of flowers.

My soul.....tears of May, refers to the soothing and benumbing influence of the garden and the spring.

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in her lids..... May, the air smells of the approaching vernal shower which has not yet burst forth from the clouds floating adove.

O Shadows.....mine, while he was still plunged in indolence, the shadows should depart at once without rousing him to the activities of mundane life which were sure to bring unhappiness. If they would depart now, he would have no regrets for their disappearance.

Stanza VI. He bids them farewell and relapses into dreams and visions of which he has ample store by day and night.'

My head cool-bedded, *cf.* Tennyson, *The Lotos-Eaters,* 'Resting weary limbs at last no beds of asphodel.'

dieted with praise, 'diet' suggests that the food offered is not natural. The poet refuses to be baited by praise which is either insincere or undeserved.

A pet-lamb farce, the poet refuses to indulge in antics only to keep the petty world in countenance. In 1819 summer, Keats wrote to a friend, "I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing, both from the over-powering idea of dead poets and from abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a philosopher and I was, consequently a little less of a versifying pet-lamb.'

masque-like figures, character in masque or masks were often disguised.

dreamy urn, the urn with shadowy undefinable figures sculptured on it.

faint visions, the visions will come with lessened force even by day.

I yet have.....store, the poet craves for repose but it is death that brought him repose at last, *cf.* Keats's Sonnet, *"Why did I laugh to-night* ?"

"Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds ;
Verse, Fame and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed."

spright, Spensarian spelling for 'spirit.' *cf.* 'Spight' for 'spite.'

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12
ODE TO APPOLLO

In thy western halls of gold
When thou sittest in thy state,
Bards, that erst sublimely told
Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,
With fervour seize their adamantine lyres.
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.
Here Homer with his nervous arms
Strikes the twanging harp of war,
And even the western splendour warms,
While the trumpets sound afar :
But, what creates the most intense surprise,
His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

Then through thy Temple wide, melodious swells
The sweet majestic tone of Maro's lyre :
Then soul delighted on each accent dwells.
Enraptured dwells, not daring to respite,
The while he tells of grief around and a funeral pyre.

'Tis awful silence then again ;
Expectant stand the spheres :
Breathless the laurell'd peers.
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease,
And leave once more the ravished heavens in peace.
Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring
The Passions—a terrific band—
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords,
While from their Master's lips pour fourth the inspiring words.

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still ! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.
Next thy Tass's ardent numbers
Float along the pleased air,
Calling youth from idle slumbers,
Rousing them from Pleasure's lair !

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Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,
And melt the soul to pity and to love.
But when *Thou* joinest with the Nine,
And all the powers if song combine,
We listen here on earth :
The dying tones that fill the air,
And charm the ear of evening fair,
From the great God of Bards, receive their heavenly birth.

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. Apollo, the god of poetry and music, is sitting in his golden palace. The Great poets of Greece, Italy and England, who have sung of heroic deeds and the destiny of man, are playing on their lyres. The chords of their lyres are as dazzling as the rays of the sun. They give out fiery radiance. They are singing immortal songs. The songs are dazzling and enchanting.

Stanza 2. Homer is singing heroic songs. When he sings of war trumpets from his Iliad, the western golden hall of Apollo glows bright. The wonder is that the eyesight of Homer is restored to him.

Stanza 3. Virgil is singing melodiouly. His tone is sublime. When he is singing the pathetic tale of Dido, Queen of Carthage, who fell in love with Aeneas, and when deserted burnt herself in the pyre. Apollo get enraptured, and hears so attentively that he hardly takes breath.

Stanza 4. After Virgil had sung his lofty strains there was deadly silence in the heavenly bodies. They waited with curiosity for the next poet. And when Milton began to sing of the war between God and Satan in majestic thundering voice, the heavenly bodies ceased to move in their orbits and stood still breathless. The lofty song was so enchanting that the heaven became perfectly mute.

Stanza 5. Shakespeare is summoned for singing his poetry. As soon as the great dramatist appears, he sings of the battalion of passions which weave the plots of his dramas and cause the ruin of the heroes and the heroines. The passions touch the strings of human heart. They play upon the string of human heart and take their toll. Their temper is tyrant because they are merciless in trapping and then running tne characters involved in them. Shakeespeare is, then, praised for the magic of his words. Shakespeare, who, controls these passions, expresses his tale in words to keep the audiences enthralled.

Stanza 6. Now appears Spenser on the scene to recite his verse to Appollo. Spenser is singing the melodious and harmonious verse and the subject is the duels of the knights with the tempters and molestors of damsels. The poet is praising the purity of the womanhood. Spenser, the great epic poet, is equally the master of the lyric poetry. There is now spontaneous outpouring from the Aeolian lyre,

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He now sings the songs of love enchantingly. The musical notes soon disappear tremblingly. They are lost in the air. Sapho and Alcaeus inspire him to play on the Aeolian lyre.

Stanza 7. Tasso sings the song of devotion and gallantry. Tasso is the great Italian poet, author of the *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581). His verses are called ardent because they deal with the first crusade, a theme of high devotion and gallantry. The melody of his song flows in the romantic atmosphere of Italy, summoning them from their idle state of inactivity and pleasures. Then his fingers move gently on the strings. Perhaps he sings lighter things now. By singing perhaps of love and pathos, he moves the hearts of the listeners to pity. (Here the poet echoes Dryden's *Alexender's Feast* 'Pity melts the mind to love'.)

Stanza 8. Appollo himself joins the Nine Muses. His melody is sweet. We here on earth, listen to him, rapt and breathless. Even the Evening gets enthralled by the dying cadence. Apollo is the great source of inspiration to all the poets.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date and Background

The Ode to Appollo belongs to the immature period of Keats's poetic career. He was then only twenty years young. The poem was written in 1815. But the poem is valuable because it reals, by contrast to his mature work, the rapid development of the poet's genius (*Weekes*).

While writing this poem Keats had in his mind the eighteenth century poets such as Dryden, Gray and Collins. *The Ode to Apollo* is thus only a verbal inheritence.

Central Idea of the Poem

Keats represents Apollo as listening while the great poets of Greece, Italy and England in turn strike the lyre of poetry. Apollo himself, however, surpasses them all in the beauty of his music. Apollo was the god of light. He presided over music, and hence over poetry, which was at first chanted or recited to a musical instrument.

Pictorial Quality

To Keats the equivalent of an emotion was a picture. Here there is nothing abstract. As we read the poem a picture is conjured up in our imagination. But Keats is not the master here. His pictorial quality and genius had not matured then. He is under the influence of the eighteenth century poets. The poem therefore remains a 'verbal inheritance'.

Style

There is no maturity in style in the poem. It is in vain to seek here the felicity of the rounded phrase which we find in his later odes,

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The lines here are weak in expression ; 'what creates the most intense surprise' is slip-shod English and 'respire' is the stilted word. The following examples will prove how far the poem is the line of the poems of Dryden, Gray, Collins and Thomson :

(1) Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his had,
And quickly forward spring,
The Passions...a terrific hand.
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords...
A silver trumpet Spenser blows...

(2) In thy western halls of gold.
When thou sittest in thy state...

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Stanza 1.

1. **Western halls of gold :** "The scene of his ode is laid apparently in the Islands of the Blessed, which, according to classical mythology, were far away in the western seaset." (*A. R. Weekes*).

2. **Sublimely told :** Homer, Virgil and Milton were epic poets who narrated tales sublimely.

3. **Sang of fate :** Sang of the destiny of man.

4. **Adamantine lyres :** Early poetry was intended to be sung to the lyre a frail instrument easily broken. Keats means to say that the dead bards use adamantine lyres.

5. **Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires :** The chords of the lyres are like the solid rays ; and because they are rays they twinkle radiant fires. The idea is that the songs the poets are singing on lyres are as dazzling and fiery as the rays of the sun. Just as the rays of the sun, while being poured out from the throne of Apollo dazzle the eyes, in the same way the imperishable songs of the great epic poets enchant the ears of Apollo. He is dazzled by the brilliance of these songs. He is hypnotised.

Stanza 2

Homer : The great Greek epic poet who wrote *Illiad.*

7. **Twanging :** Producing a sharp sound.

8. **Nervous :** Sinewy and powerful i.e. strong.

9. **Harp :** A kind of musical instrument.

10. **The western splendour warms :** 'As the sun palace of Hyperion glows fiery rad when the God is angry, so does Apollo's when the war chant of Homer is heard.'—(*A. R. Weekes*).

11. **What creates...surprise :** This line is remarkable for its weekness. "Create surprise" is slip-shod English.—(*A. R. Weekes*).

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12. **Renovated eyes :** Homer while on earth was blind, but his sight is restored to him after death. The one explanation is that after death there remains no blindness. The soul is liberated. Bodily deformity of any kind can be possible only in life, not after death. The other explanation may be that Homer though physically blind possesses the eyes of imagination. Like a visionary he can see past and future.

Stanza 3

13. **Swell :** Rises in volume.

14. **Maro :** Publius Vergillius Maro (70-20 B. C.), whose Aeneid is the great epic poem of Roman literature.

15. **On each accent dwells :** The heart of Apollo gets so enthralled that it dwells on every measure of the poem.

16. **Enraptured dwells :** The heart of Apollo dwells on every measure as though he is hynotized by the melody and pathos of the tale.

17. **Daring to respire :** Apollo is listening with rapt attention. He does not take even breath, fearing lest he may miss any word.

18. **A funeral pyre :** "The allusion is probably to Dido, Queen of Carthage, who hospitably entertained Aeneas and fell in love with him. When he deserted her she caused a great funeral pyre to be built on the pretext of offering a sacrifice, and slew herself upon it."—*A. R. Weekes.*

Stanza 4

20. **Expectant :** Waiting for the next poet with great curiosity.

21. **Sphere :** The heavens, a reference to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy.

22. **Laurell'd peers :** The phrase is vaguely reminiscient of Milton. The laurel with which the bards are crowned was *laurs nobilis*, the bay tree, which was sacred to Apollo and grew around his sanctuary in Delphi.

23. **Lofty strain :** Keats uses such epithets as 'lofty strain', 'mejestic tone of Maro's lyre', 'the twanging harp of war', etc. because he is dealing with the epic poets who have sublimely sung of some great war of some other great subject. Sublimity is the essential of epic poetry, and also of the dramas of Shakespeare.

24. **Milton's tuneful thunders :** Tuneful because poetry is musical and thunders because he is singing of war in heaven.

Stanza 5

25. **Thou :** Apollo.

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26. **wave his hand :** Not in farewell, but as a summons.

27. **The passions :** In the dramas of Shakespeare, the passions spin the plot. The characters are involved in the passions of love, hatred, jealousy and the like.

28. **A terrific band :** Passions are terrible because they are threatening the ruin.

29. **Best accords :** Suits most.

Stanza 6.

30. **Martial notes :** Heroic tone of the duels of the knights with the molesters of women.

31. **Flows :** Comes out spontaneously.

32. **Wild warblings :** Passonate songs spontaneously sung.

33. **Spotless chastity :** *Faeri Queene* glorifies the virtue of chastity.

33. **Wild warblings :** Passionate songs spontaneously sung.

34. **Aeolian lyre :** "This should refer to lyric poetry alone, for the allusion is properly to the lyric verse of Sappho and Alcaeus, both of whom were born in Aeolis or Aeolia and used the aeolic dialect. After the first three books of the *Faerie Queene* had been published, Spenser returned to lyric poetry, producing, among other works, his *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion* and the *Four Hymns*".—*A.R. Weekes.*

35. **Silver :** The note of the silver trumpet is peculiarly sweet and pure.

Stanza 7.

36. **Tasso :** A great Italian poet, author of the *Jerusalam Delivered* (1581). His verses are called ardent because they deal with the first crusade. At the close of the Stanza Keats recalls the love stories of Erminia and Tancred and of Rinaldo and Armida, which Tasso introduced to lighten his heroic subject.

37. **Float along the pleased air :** Flow in the hot atmosphere of love or romance.

38. **Idle slumbers :** State of Inactivity.

39. **Pleasures lair :** Pleasures and luxuries.

40. **His fingers gently move :** Because he is now singing of love and pathos.

41. **Melt to pity and to love :** Moves pity and love in the hearts of the listeners.

Stanza 8

42. **Thou :** Apollo. **Nine :** The Nine Muses.

43. **All the powers of song :** The gifts of poetry.

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13

ODE TO FANNY

(I)

PHYSICIAN Nature ! let my spirit blood !
O ease my heart of verse and let me rest ;
Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood
Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.
A theme ! a theme ! greet nature ! give a theme ;
Let me begin my dream.
I come—I see thee, as thou standest there,
Becon me not into the wintry air.

(II)

Ah ! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,
And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries—
To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears
A smile of such delight,
As brilliant and as bright,
As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,
Lost in soft amaze,
I gaze, I gaze !

(III)

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast ?
What stare outfaces now my silver moon !
Ah ! keep that hand unravished at the least ;
Let, let the amorous burn—
But, pr'ythee, do not turn
The current of your heart from me so soon.
O ! save, in charity,
The quickest pulse for me.

(IV)

Save it for me, sweet love ! though music breathe
Voluptuous visions into the warm air ;
Through swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath,
Be like an April day,
Smiling and cold and gay,
A temperate lilly, temperate as fair ;
Then, Heaven ! there will be
A warmer June for me.

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(V)

Why, this—you'll say, my Fanny ! is not true :
Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,
Where the heart beats : confess—'tis nothing new—
Must not a woman be
A feather on the sea,
Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide ?
Of as uncertain speed
As blow-ball from the mead ?

(VI)

I know it—and to know it is despair
To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny !
Whose heart goes fluttering for you every where,
Nor, when away you roam,
Dare keep its wretched home,
Love, love alone, his pains severe and many :
Then, loveliest ; keep me free,
From torturing jealousy.

(VII)

Ah ! if you prize my subdued soul above
The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour ;
Let none profane my Holy See of love,
Or with a rude hand break
The sacramental cake :
Let none else touch the just new-budded flower ;
If not—may my eyes close,
Love ! on their lost repose.

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. Addressing Nature as Physician, the poet prays to her to give him a theme by writing on which he may relieve his pent-up heart. "O Nature, the healer of sick soul ! change the blood of my sick soul so that it is healed and my heart is relieved of the burden of writing verse." Then the poet compares himself to the priestess of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, who was placed upon a tripod over a hole in the temple floor. At certain seasons vapour issued from the hole, and by it the priestess was inspired to prophesy. The poet requests nature to inspire him likewise so that he may compose an inspired poem, and thus 'ease his heart of verse'. His feelings for Fanny are pent-up in his heart and he seeks a way to let them flow out of his heart. He wants that the full stream of his passionate emotions should be released from his heart. He seeks a fit theme to compose his poem. The poet, then, sees Fanny in imagination, and requests her not to beckon him into the cheerless and loveless atmosphere. He forbids her to drive him forth into the icy coldness of jealousy.

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Stanza 2. Fanny, the dearest love, is the fountain of all fears, hopes, joys and panting miseries of the poet. She is the source of fears because Keats is suffering from a fatal disease and fears that his sweetheart may leave him. This makes the life of Keats miserable. Yet Fanny is the source of joys. In imagination he sees the lovely figure of Fanny. She is a phantom of delight. She looks cheerful, smiling and all aglow in her heavenly beauty and bubbling, blooming youth. Amazed and hynotised, Keats gazes at her with ravished vassal eyes.

Stanza 3. In a fit of jealousy Keats thinks that some one is making love with his Fanny. She is flirting and making advances in a love affair with somebody else. With amorous passionate looks some one is eating his feast, that is, enjoying his sweet Fanny. Some one is outfacing his beloved whom he calls silver moon. The idea of these lines is found in a passage underlined by Keats himself in his own copy of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). They cannot look off whom they love, they will deflower her with their eyes. There are gazing, staring stealing faces, smiling, and glancing at her. Keats is jealous of all these glances cast at his beloved. Let other stares of other people not outface his silver moon (Fanny). Let the lovers chase her, but she should be indifferent to them and should not show any signs of advancements to their amorous looks. She should not transfer her love from him to them, he prays. She should keep for him at least out of generosity, her sincere and warm love.

Stanza 4. Keats requests Fanny to keep her love afresh for him. Fanny is fond of music and dancing. Let no man's voice captivate her, let no dancer's embrace entice her. In spite of efforts of other young men she should remain chaste and pure. She should remain fresh, smiling and gay like an April day but she should be indifferent to others. She should be like a lily, though beautiful yet pure. He hopes that the joyous days of spring will return and he will make love with Fanny. He will be cured of his disease and will have full vitality to enjoy the bubbling youth of his sweetheart.

Stanza 5. You may say that my opinion about woman is not true. Put your hand on your heart and realize yourself the truth of my statement. Examine it on your own quick pulse ; you yourself shall realize how faithful you have been to me. Your faithfulness is not something new. Women, by and large, have been flirt and faithless and fickle. As a feather on the sea is swayed to and fro by every wind and tide, so is the woman lured into temptation. A woman in love should not be as uncertain as a blow-ball from the meadow. A blow-ball (thistle-down) goes on hanging like a pandulum in the wind ; it is not constant and firm.

Stanza 6. The poet knows that women are fickle. This fills his heart with despair. He loves Fanny and fears that Fanny may be fickle. This makes his life miserable. He loves Fanny sincerly, blindly and wholeheartedly. He chases her like a butterfly, and feels a butterfly

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moving in his heart when he sees her. His condition becomes miserable when she goes far away from him. Love gives birth to torturing and consuming passion of jealousy. When a man is in love with a woman he is always suffering from trials and tribulations. He requests Fanny to save him from the green eyed-monster jealousy. This she can do only if she remains pure and constant. When Keats wrote this poem he had in mind perhaps the tragedy of Othello.

Stanza 7. Keats's the poet tells Fanny that if she really values his true love more than the temporary, petty and fading pleasures of an hour of dance. Let nobody pollute the Holy See of love in her (a see is a seat or jurisdiction of a bishop or archbishop). She should not allow any stranger to profane the place that should be kept holy for him alone. She should not insult this sacred tie by accepting amorous advances from other persons. If she cannot remain pure for him, it is better that the solemn betrothal ties be broken. Let none else touch the just new-budded flower of her beauty. If she allows her bubbling and fragrant youth to be enjoyed by others it is reposing for Keats to die.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date and Occasion of the poem

This poem was written after 1818. Keats had met Fanny in November or December, 1818. It was published in the Houghton edition of 1848. It is addressed to Fanny Brawne, and is the expression of a mood which betrays itself in one of Keats's letters to that lady, written in July 1819. "At night, when the lonely day closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical chamber is waiting to receive me as into a sepulchre, then, believe me, my passion gets entirely the sway ; then I would not have you see those rhapsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to."

Again, "I have never known any unalloyed happiness for many days together ; the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours ; and now, when none such troubles oppress me, it is, you must confess, very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me..."

"In case of the worst that can happen, I shall still love you but what hatred shall I have for another ! Some lines I read the other day are continually ringing a peal in my ears :

To see those eyes I prize above my own,
Dart favours on another.....
And their sweet lips, yielding immortal nectar,
Be gently pressed by any but myself,
Think, think, Francesce, what a cursed thing,
It were beyond expression."

Subject-matter of the Poem

"The whole of this poem expresses the miserable jealous of a lover whose passion is poisoned by uncertainty. When the poet

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was writing this poem he was probably remembering his Shakespeare and the tragedy of Othello who was consumed by the 'Green-eyed monster' Desdemona. He wrote this poem when he had learnt that Fanny had been flirting with others and had been dancing with some other young men.

The poet requests nature to give him a theme by writing on which he may relieve his pent-up heart. Fanny is the sweet home of the poet's tears and hopes. Her beauty wears a delightful smile. The poet looks at her with ravished eyes. He is filled with the passion of jealousy and thinks that some one is eating up his feast with greedy looks : someone outfaces his silver moon. He requests her to keep her quickest pulse secure for him.

Though music is tempting and arouses passions and though dancing with others is dangerous, he requests her to be like an April day, smiling and cold and gay. The poet expresses his cynical ideas about women. According to him a woman is like a feather on the sea, swayed to and fro by every wind and tide. The poet knows that women are unfaithful, and he loves Fanny deeply. His heart goes fluttering for her everywhere. This is the cause of his disappointment. He requests her to keep him free from the torturing jealousy. So he asks her to prize his soul above those with whom she sings and dances or she should break the engagement. If she cannot remain untouched for him, he will close his eyes for ever.

Cynic Treatment of Women

Fanny is a phantom of delight for Keats. She is the home of all his fears and joys. She cannot help gazing at her constantly. The poet imagines that she is dancing with many of her admirers and lovers. The music is breathing lustful passions in the heart of dancers, and is making the atmosphere warm which is congenial to love-making. He asks her to be like an April day, smiling and cold and gay, like a lily, fair yet pure. But soon his attitude changes towards cynicism. He imagines Fanny to be flirting with others. And this makes him conclude that all women are inconstant in love, and that a woman is as wavering as a feather on the sea swayed to and fro by wind tide.

Careless Workmanship

According to *Mr. A. R. Weekes*, there are some fine passages in this poem, but on the whole the poem shows only careless workmanship. Even the opening lines of the poem are not quite impressive. However, the poem has some beautiful patches here and there. For example :

> ...thy beauty wear,
> A smile of such delight,
> As brilliant and as bright,
> As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes
> Lost in soft amaze,
> I gaze, I gaze.

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Some of the similes and metaphors of the poems are very much charming. The images are quite vivid and living. The poem is remarkable for the usual romantic qualities of Keats' poetry—e.g. melancholy love for nature, emotionalism, individuality and subjectivity, simple and sonourous diction, etc.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Stanza 1.

1. **Physician Nature**—Nature is considered by Keats as the healer of the wounds. Cf. Wordsworth's treatment of Nature as a healer of sick souls. **Let my spirit blood :** A metaphor which to us seems unpoetical. The allusion is to the old medical practice of bleeding a sick man for the relief of his disease ; here the writing of the poem is to relieve Keats of the burden of his own thoughts.

2. **Ease my heart of verse and let me rest**—The poet wants to express the burden of his despaired love in a poem, and thus ease his heart. The poet can rest only when he has expressed his painful feelings.

3. **Tripod :** A change of metaphor. The poet compares himself to the priestess of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, who was placed upon a tripod over a hole in the temple floor. At certain seasons vapour issued from the hole, and by it the priestess was inspired to prophesy. **The flood of Stifling numbers**—The full stream of passionate emotions which remain suppressed.

4. **Ebbs from my full breast :** Is released from my pent-up heart.

6. **My dream :** Dream of composing a poem on Fanny so that he may unburden his heart.

8. **Beckon me into the wintry air**—Do not drive me forth into the icy coldness of jealousy.

Stanza 2.

10. **Painting miseries**—Sorrows that make one gasp hard.

11. **Wears and smile of such delight :** Puts on a cheerful look.

17. **Ravished :** Enchanted. **Aching :** Sometimes extreme joy is painful. **Vassal eyes :** Eyes of Keats which have been enchanted by Fanny's lovely face.

15. **Lost in soft amaze :** Astonished.

Stanza 3.

17. **Greedy looks**—Passionate amorous glances.

18. **East up my feast**—Enjoys my pleasure, the pleasure here refers to Fanny Brawne, the beloved of Keats.

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17-22. **Who now.....so soon :** It has been pointed out that the idea of these lines is to be found in a passage underlined by Keats in his copy of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) : "They cannot look off whom they love ; they will deflower her with their eyes" ; he still gazing, staring, stealing faces, smiling, glancing at her." Keats is jealous of every glance cast at his beloved Fanny.

19. **unravished :** Untouched.

20. **The amorous burn :** Let the lovers chase her.

21. **Do not turn the current of your heart from me :** Do not be indifferent to me, do not change the current of your love toward others.

23. **Keep in charity the quickest pulse :** Be generous to me and keep your sincere love in reserve for me.

Stanza 4.

25. **Save it :** Reserve your love. **Music :** dancing etc. **Breathe :** Play on. **Voluptuous visions :** Passionate desires. **The warm air :** The warm atmosphere—music and dancing as "none of the least" among artificial allurements to passion.

27. **Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath :** Burton further ranks dancing as "none of the least" among artificial allurements to passion.

28. **Like an April day :** Fresh and bright like the early days of the spring season.

29. **Cold :** Indifferent.

30. **Temperate as fair :** Fair and self-controlled.

32. **A warmer June for me :** Joys would return.

Stanza 5.

33. **This—you'll say my Fanny ! is not true :** You may say that my opinion about woman is not true.

34. **Put your soft hand upon your snowy side :** Put your hand on your heart and realize yourself the truth of my statement. Examine it on your own quick pulse ; you yourself realize how faithful you have been to me.

35. **' Tis nothing new :** That women are fickle.

40. **Blow-ball :** Thistle-down.

Stanza 6.

43. **What heart goes fluttering for you everywhere :** Who loves you deeply.

48. **Keep me from torturing jealousy :** Save me from the 'green eyed monster' of jealousy by remaining pure and constant.

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Stanza 7.

50. **The poor, the fading brief pride of an hour :** pretty brief enjoyment of dancing in the company of other person.

51. **Profane :** Defile ; corrupt.

51. **Holy See :** A See is the seat of jurisdiction of a bishop or arch-bishop. Keats prays to his lady not to allow any stranger to profane the place that should be kept holy for him alone.

52. **Rude hand...the sacramental cake :** The reference is to the wafer broken by the priest at the celebration of Mass Break. The sacred wedding cake is a mark of solemn betrothal tie.

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14

HYMN TO APOLLO

God of the golden bow,
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair,
And of the golden fire,
Charioteer
Of the patient year,
Where—where slept thine ire,
When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,
Thy laurel, thy glory,
The light of thy story,
Or was I a worm—too low crawling, for death ?
O Delphic Apollo !
The Thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd,
The Thunderer frown'd and frown'd ;
The eagle's feathery mane
For wrath became stiffen'd—the sound
Of breeding thunder
Went drowsily under,
Muttering to be unbound,
O why didst thou pity, and for a worm
Why touch thy soft lute
Till the thunder was mute,
Why was not I crush'd—such a pitiful germ ?
O Delphic Apollo !
The Pleiades were up,
Watching the silent air ;
The seeds and roots in the Earth
Were swelling for summer fare ;
The Ocean, its neighbour,
Was at its old labour,
When, who—who did dare
To tie, like a madman, thy plant round his brow.
And grin and look proudly,
And blaspheme so loudly,
And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now ?
O Delphic Apollo !

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PARAPHRASE

Lines 1-12. Apollo is in turn invoked as the archer-god, as god of music, as long-haired and ushorn, as the sun-god, and as driving the chariot of the sun. The poet asks Apollo why he (the poet) was not punished when he put on the laurel wreath which should be put on only by Apollo. He wants to know whether he was too contemptuous for notice. He admits that he was a blank idiot for having put on the wreath which is reserved for Apollo or for the select few.

Lines 13-24. When Keats wore the laruel wreath, Jove got angry. He grasped tightly the thunder in his hand to punish the poet. The comparison of angry Jove with the eagle, and of the rubling sound of thunder with the muttering of a man in sleep is pictorial. Jove in his anger looked like an eagle whose feathers stiffened on her neck because of anger. His thunder, restless for punishing is compared with a man who is complaining because of some repression. Keats wants to know from Apollo why he took pity on him, a man as insignificant as a worm. Why did Apollo save his life by intervening in his favour ? Why did he play on the lute thus softening and neutralising the anger of Jove ?

Lines 25-36. The poet describes the time when he had insulted Jove outrageously. The pleiades (constellation) had risen at the beginning of May. The atmosphere was silent after the anger of Jove had cooled. Both land and water were getting ready for bringing forth all their produce. It was thus in the spring season that the poet outrageously offended Jove by wearing the laurel wreath. Keats, now feeling ashamed of his conduct, begs apology at the feet of Apollo.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date and Background

Hymn to Apollo was written in 1815 in a fitful mood of repentance. "In this Ode Keats expresses his penitence for some not of presumption of which he has been guilty. The allusion seems to be the fact, chronicled in another early poem—the *Sonnet to a Young Lady* who sent me a laurel Crown—that Keats had dared to place an actual wreath of laurel on his own forehead ; i. e. to claim for himself the rank of a poet."—(*A. R. Weekes*).

The Background of the poem has been very well described by *Woodhouse* in the following words : "As Keats and Leigh Hunt were taking their wine together after dinner, at the house of the latter, the whim seized them (probably at Hunt's instigation) to crown themselves with laurel after the fashion of the elder bards. While they were thus attired, two of Hunt's friends happened to call upon him. Just, before their entrance Hunt removed the wreath from his own brow, and suggested to Keats that he might as well do the same. Keats, however, in his mad enthusiastic way vowed that he would not take

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off his crown for any human being, and he accordingly wore it, without any explanation, as long as the visit lasted. He mentioned the circumstances afterwards to some of his friends, along with his sense of folly and, I believe, presumption of his conduct. And he said he was determined to record it by an apologetic *Ode to Apollo* on the occasion. He shortly after wrote this fragment."

The Central Idea of the Poem

The poet addresses Apollo as the god of the golden bow, of the golden lyre, the golden hair and the golden fire. The poet asks him why he did not punish him (the poet) when as a blank idiot he put on his laurel wreath. Jove is ready to punish him with his thunder but kind hearted Apollo intervenes in his favour and plays on the lute to soften the anger of Jove. The poet, narrates the occasion when he committed this vain glory. The Pleides were up, the seeds and roots in Earth were growing for summer fare and the ocean was rising into waves. At that time the poet tied the wreath round his brow, thus committing this blasphemy. He is now repenting for his foolishness is stooping to be forgiven.

Pictorial Quality

Keats was a raw artist when he wrote this ode. But some images promising a better future are used here :

> The eagle's feathery mane
> For wrath became stiffen'd the sound
> Of breeding thunder
> When browsily under,
> Muttering to be unbound.

Diction and Metre

Language in the poem is easy. Diction and style are simple. Metrically the poem is an imitation of Dryden or Gray. "The quality of music, the birth right of great poets, was given of Keats in full measure even in dearly days, for example, the *Hymn to Apollo*, which has few other merits, move with a spring vigour and fulness of tone worthy of a better meaning."—(*A. R. Weekes*).

Shortcomings

This Ode is one of the most unpoetical of Keats's odes. According to *Sidney Colvin*, the *Hymn to Apollo* has been composed in a strain of ranting verse. Poetically it has little value of excellence ; but as an autobiographical poem it has certainly some value and significance. Rossetti also expresses the same view when he says that this ode is wretched but for fine metre.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Stanza I

1. **God of golden bow** : Archer-god.
2. **Of the golden lyre** : God of music.

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3. **Of the golden hair :** Apollo is described as a god with golden hair. The rays of the sun make his hair golden. The rays are like the hair. His hair are shorn and unshorn.

4. **Of the golden fire :** Fire is golden. Apollo is represented as the sun-god, he is described as a fall of fire. This is a phrase after the fashion of the 18th century poets.

7. **Where slept thine ire :** Why did Apollo not get angry. **Ire :** Anger.

8. **Blank idiot :** An unqualified fool ; a thoughtless fellow.

9. **The glory :** The laurel-wreath is the glory of Apollo as the god of music and poetry.

10. **The light of thy story :** The laurel wreath is the symbol of Apollo being the god of poetry.

11. **Was I a worm ?** Was I as insignificant and contemptuous as the worm is.

12. **Too low creepings for death :** Too insignificant for punishment.

13. **O Delphic Apollo :** Apollo was worshipped in his temple at Delphi in Northern Greece.

Stanza II

14. **The thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd/The thunderer frown'd and frown'd :** The poet wants to heighten the effect by such repetitions. **The Thunderer :** Jove, who got angry and held the thunder tightly in his hands to punish Keats because he had offended him by wearing the laurel-wreath which is reserved for Apollo or the select few. **Frown'd :** Jove got angry.

15. **The eagle's feathery mane :** The feathers on the eagle. The eagle was sacred to Jove.

16. **Became stiffened :** When the eagle gets angry, the feathers on its neck bacome stiff.

17. **The sound of breeding thunder :** The rumbling sound of thunder just on the point of brearking out. Mark the picture and the image, i. e., the comparison of angry Jove with an angry eagle stiffening its feathers.

18. **Went drowsily under :** Became fainter.

20. This line betrays the Sentimentalism of earlier Keats.

21. Why did Apollo sympathise an insignificant, even contemtuous man like Keats and intervened in his favour to cool the wrath of angry Jove ?

22. **A pitiful germ :** Such a contemptuous creats as Keats.

Stanza III

23. **The Pleiades :** This contellation comes in the view at the beginning of May.

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24. **Swelling :** Growing up. **Summer fare :** Full growth in the spring season.

25. **The Ocean, its neighbour :** The Ocean is the neighbour of the earth.

26. **Was at his old labour :** Was rising into waves.

27. **The plants :** The laurel wreath. Keats had put on the laurel wreath though for a short time.

28. **Grin :** Smile foolishly. **Look proudly :** After wearing the wreath.

29. **Blaspheme :** Act irreligiously.

30. **Live for that honour :** To aspire to be a great poet. **To stoop to thee now :** To apologise in the feet of Apollo who had saved the life of the poet by interceding in his favour.

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15

TO HOMER

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So thou wast blind ;—but then the veil was rent,
For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive ;
Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,
And precipices show untrodden green ;
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
There is a triple sight in blindness keen ;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Diana, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

PARAPHRASE AND SUMMARY

The poem was first published in 1848 and said to have been written in 1818. Forman records that Rossetti, influenced doubtlessly the phrase "giant ignorance" inspite of this evidence, thought that the sonnet must have preceded 'On Looking into Chapman's Homer'. The use of the Shakespearean form however corroborates the external evidence given above.

The sonnet expresses Keats's enthusiasm for Homer whose work he seems to have read, though not yet in Chapman's translation Homer and the ancient Greeks were of special appeal to Keats since he was himself Hellenistic by his natural temperament and sensibility.

The octave is paean of enthusiastic, exiting praise for Homer. The phrase "giant ignorance" in the first line suggests Keats's inability to real Homer's work in original Greek, though he longs to read it. He has come to know some facts about Homer's life and cyclades, a group of islands in the Aegaean sea, said to be the birthplace of Homer and the centre of the ancient Greek civilisation. The next two lines describe Keats's own helpless plight ; in his ignorance of the Greek language, he is a man sitting on the shore of vast sea hiding in its womb rich corals and the dream region of dolphins. He yearns to take a dive into the deep, but he cannot, since the sea—that is Homer's work—is unfathomable for him.

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In the next four lines, Keats expresses his sense of extreme wonder at the face that Homer was blind. How could he then describe in his great poems, Illiad and Odessey, objects and persons in such vivid details and exactitude ? But, perhaps, the gods themselves worked for and through Homer. They loved the cover of blindness. Jove, the greatest of the gods of heaven, uncovered Heaven for Homer ; Neptune, the god of the ocean, opened the secrets of the depths to him ; and Pan, the god of the forest and music, composed songs for him with the wind shaking the trees and the groves.

In the sestet Keats tries to understand the mystery of Homer's wondrous achievement despite his blindness. In every bad there is something good hidden ; and every suffering or physical disability has its own recompense. All darkness is surrounded by light. There are fresh green turts to be seen at the edge of stony precipices. Midnight hides in itself the morning sun. Similarly, in blindness there is hidden a sight three times more powerful than the natural eyes can give. Hemer, though blind, indeed had the sight, inner vision, of the gods, **Diana, Jove and Satan.**

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16

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many Western Islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne ;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold,
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He started at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

INTRODUCTION

George Chapman (1550-1634), an English poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan age, published a translation of Homer in 1596. Keats first read this translation of Homer in 1815. As Palgrave writes, "Chapman's fine paraphrase was put before Keats by his friend Charles Cowden Clarke, and they sat up together till day light to read it, Keats shouting with delight as some passage of special energy struck his imagination. At ten O'C ock the next morning, Mr. Clarke found the sonnet on the breakfast table."

The sonnet stands out from the 1817 volume as the one poem which may rank in conception and execution with Keats's later work. Its date is therefore very important, and has been much discussed. Keats on its first publication dated it October 1816. It was composed after a "symposium" held at Keats's room in Dean Street. "It was," Says Keats's friend Clarke, "in teeming wonderment of his first introduction, that, when I came to breakfast the next morning, I found on my table a letter with no enclosure than this famous sonnet, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer". We had parted at day-spring yet he contrived that I should receive the poem from a distance of, may be, two miles by ten O'clock."

PARAPHRASE

Keats speaks of his reading of poetry under the similitude of journey through rich countries. In the course of this journey he had often heard of Homer's 'Illiad' and 'Odyssey'. But because of his

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ignorance of the Greek language these great epics have remained sealed. Now, however, in Chapman's translation of Homer, he has learned to know these great works. He compares his feelings to those of an astronomer who has discovered a new star or to those with which the Spaniards caught sight of the hitherto unknown Pacific from some height in Darien.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

George Chapman (1559-1634), an English poet and dramatist of the Elizabethan age, published a translation of Homer's work in 1596. Keats first read his translation in 1815, Chapman's fine paraphrase was put before Keats by his friend Cowden Clarke and they sat up together till day light to read it, Keats shouting with delight as some passage of special energy struck his imagination. At ten O'clock the next morning, Mr. Clarke found the sonnet on the breakfast table.

The sonnet was composed in 1815 after a "symposium" held at Keats's room in Dean Street. "It was," says Keats's friend Clarke, "in teeming wonderment of his first introduction, that, when I came to breakfast the next morning, I found on my table a letter with no enclosure than this famous sonnet, On First Looking into Chapman's Homer. We had parted at dayspring, yet he contrived that I should receive the poem from a distance of, may be, two miles by ten O' clock."

Its date of composition is important becauae Keats died in 1921.

In this poem Keats pays one of the finest tributes to Chapman's translation of Homer. Keats wrote the poem in his twentieth year of life. Keats had a great regard for Homer's poetic genius, Homer's Kingdom was a realm of pure gold for Keats. After reading Chapman's translation the poet felt a new thrill of joy running in his heart. Keats was, thus, introduced to the glorious regions of Homer genius.

Keats experienced powerfully new sensations. He had enjoyed the beauties of other poets, but had no opportunity to visit Homer's kingdom. The credit of having enjoyed the beauties of Homer's poetry would go to Chapman. Keats's quest for poetic beauty and the delight he experienced in the fulfilment are compared to the joy and delight experienced by an astronomer when he discovered a new planet. It was a similar delight experienced by an explorer when he discovered a new course in the Pacific.

This sonnet reveals the aspect of Keat's genius. It speaks of his command of execution and intensity of his deep emotional quality. The poet imagines himself as a traveller and explorer in quest of poetic gold. Like the explorer and the navigator of Spain, the poet also had set out in search of poetic beauty. In his exploration, he

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was guided by Chapman. This Elizabethan poet discovered for Keats Homer's kingdom. This sonnet is a proof of Keats's great love for Greek literature of Hellenism.

The sonnet is rich in poetic expression. There is a perfect felicity of phrase. Keats excels in the presentation of his thoughts in appropriate language. His poetry is suggestive. There is suggestion of wonder, thrill and excitement in the following lines :

And all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Keats's sonnet is the first poem in which his genius stands revealed. Like Shakespeare, he had little knowledge of Greek. But Keats seems to have picked up a good deal of classical mythology in his school days. No one contributed more than Keats to the revival of Helenic spirit at the beginning of the 19th century.

Keats commits an error when he refers to Crotez as the discoverer of Pacific. In fact it was Balboa, the Spanish navigator who was responsible for the discovery.

Keats follows the structure of the Italian or Petrarchan form in this sonnet. It consists of an Octave of eight lines and a sestet of six lines. The rhyming scheme is :

ab ba ab ba c d c d c d.

The metre is iambic pentameter :

Much have/I tra/vell'd in/the realm/of gold/
And man/y good/ly states and king/doms seen/

The last stanza of the sonnet contains one of the finest similes of Keats :

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stare'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The poem has drawn magnificent simile from Robertson's narrative of Balboa's first sight of the Pacific ocean and another from Bonnycastle's narrative of Herschel's discovery of Uranus. We feel that to the excitement of the exploration of the earth, the heavens, and the golden realms of poetry Keats was adding the ardour of the explorations of his own poetic powers.

Among the shorter poems, the sonnet is Keats's best poetic gem. It is indeed, a miniature of Keats's peculiar art at its best. It is regarded by competent critics as the best specimen of the Italian sonnet—form is English with its distinct flow and ebb of the single thought, the octave being dominated by the imagery of eager search and the

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sestet by that of breathless discovery as Middleton Murry has aptly pointed out. The verse is already studded with such precise and condensed epithets as can be found only in his great Odes.

ANNOTATIONS, GIST AND EXPLANATIONS

Lines (1-4) :

Gist—I have read much good poetry especially in the works of the poets of Western Europe.

Meanings :—

1. **Much have I travell'd etc** : I have read much poetry and also many accounts of goodly states and kingdoms.

2. **The realms of gold** : The golden world of poetry, or the "kingdom of letters," where Apollo, the god of poets, was sovereign. Keats was passionately fond of reading even before he left school and afterwards, when, apprenticed to a surgeon, devoted to it the whole of his spare time.

3. **States and kingdoms** : The accounts of states and kingdoms i.e., books of history.

4. **Western Islands** : A reference to the poetry of Britain, or the writings of western authors. Homer was a Greek, and Greece is in the south-east corner of Europe. With reference, therefore, to Greece, other places of Europe will be spoken of as belonging to the west. "In fealty."

5. **Fealty** : Fidelity or loyalty implies the idea of the faithful adherence of a vassal to a superior of whom he holds his lands.

6. **Apollo** : A god who, according to ancient Greek mythology, presided over science and arts. Bards, says the poet, hold these islands in fealty to Apollo ; in other words, I have read the writings of the poets of western Europe.

Lines 5-8

Gist—The poet was informed about the huge mass of Homer's poetry. He could enjoy it through Chapman's translation.

Meanings—

7. **Wide expanse** : The huge mass of poetry which was written by Homer.

8. **Deep, brow'd** : Having a projected forehead. In ancient busts, Homer is represented as a gray bearded old man with a projecting forehead. Depth or perpendicularity of the forehead signifies great intellectual capacity. The meaning of the lines is sufficiently clear to require any explanation. "I never felt the great influence of Homer in the realm of poetry till I read the translation of his poems by Chapman."

9. **Demesne** : Domain, possession. It is pronounced as dimi[illegible] n" to rhyme with "seri : n" (serene).

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10. **Serene :** The clear air of high places ; but the world is also charged with a sense of the calm of lofty spirits. This power of selecting words goes to suggest ideas even nobler than those they express. It is an essential gift of the great poet.

Lines 9-14

Gist—The poet likens the excitement which he felt on first looking into Chapman's translation of Homer to that of an astronomer or of an explorer.

Meanings—

9. **Then I felt like some, etc. :** When I read Chapman's translation of Homer, I experienced almost the same feeling of astonished pleasure as is felt by the astronomer who while watching the heavens, sees a new planet coming to his view.

10. **Watcher of the skies :** Astronomer.

11. **Swims into his ken :** comes within the field of his telescope.

12. **Cortez :** A Spanish adventurer of the sixteenth century. Cortez was the conqueror of Mexico. Keats confounds Cortez with Balboa, the first white man who, with a number of followers, crossed the isthmus of Darien and saw the Pacific Queen from the American Coast (1513).

13. **Stout :** Strong and brave.

14. **Eagle eyes :** Sharp, keen and curious eyes.

15. **Wild surmise :** In a state of excitement while they were trying to conjecture the nature and importance of their discovery.

16. **Surmise :** Conjecture, guess.

17. **Silent :** Tongue-tied because of amazement.

18. **Darien :** The older name of the Isthmus of Panama. Then felf I.....Darien—This is one of the most significant similes of John Keats.

Exp.—**Then felt I.....in Darien (Lines 9-14)**

The poet was moved to passion and joy when he read Homer through the translations of Chapman. He was highly inspired.

This excitement of the poet could be compared to that of an astronomer when a new star falls within the range of his telescope, he is very much happy. His joy knows no bounds because he sees a new star. Similarly the discoverer is very happy on discovering a new land : Vasco Numez de Balboa looked at the Pacific with sharp eyes. He was discovering a new land. His companions were in a state of excitement. They were conjecturing the nature and importance of this discovery. They were tongue-tied with amazement while they were on a summit in the Isthmus of Panama.

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The famous Palgrave's anthology of English Poetry, The Golden Treasury gives it the title "Terror of death"

17

WHEN I HAVE FEARS THAT I MAY CEASE TO BE

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain ;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance ;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflection love ;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

INTRODUCTION

In Palgrave's famous anthology of English poetry, The Golden Treasury, this sonnet of Keats bears the title, *The Terror of Death.* It may have been given some other title too : but its first line provides its own apt title :

"When I have fears that I may cease to be"

The poem, however, does not express so much "The Terror of Death" as a deep, frustrating sense of despair in the face of death, of which its last two lines provide strong evidence.

Evidently, Keats began to feel the imminence of death from the time when his sore throat worsened, followed by an attack of tuberculosis. It seems possible that Keats wrote this sonnet in that state of apprehending the fast approaching death.

But, this conjecture is contradicted by the comparatively heroic gesture and happy atmosphere of many of his Odes written during this period. At least, in them, there is no sense of despair and defeat; in them, Keats faces death boldly and triumphs over it with finding joy in the contemplation of the imperishable beauty of the arts of the world of nature.

The poem expresses the poet's wish to do something solid before his death. The end should not come too soon. He should be able

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to find romance in clouds. He should live long to admire love. If these things do not take place the poet's fate is miserable. He is lonly in this world.

CRITICAL SUMMARY AND PARAPHRASE

The poet is haunted by a fear of imminent death, and, develops a sense of despair. He has a lot of things to write about, and the universe is full of beautiful things, but when he dies, they will cease to be of any meaning to him. Even while living, the thought of death makes him feel lonely. Things that give him inestimable joy, in the moment of fear of death, sink to nothingness leaving him forlorn.

The octave of the sonnet is divided into two parts of four lines each ; the first part is devoted to the poet's sense of despair of death cutting short his life before he has been able to give expression to the teeming plethora of thought and feelings in his mind in a large number of books which will be store-house of his experiences.

In the second part of the octave, the poet laments that, after his own death, he would no longer have the joy of looking at the sky full of twinkling stars which suggest mysteries of the space. It is very painful to think that the poet would not live longer to ruminate over the ceaseless beauties of nature.

The sestet, again, is divided into two parts ; the first consisting of four lines, and the second, of two lines with which the poem concludes.

In the sestet the poet turns to his fair lady-love. He is actually pained to think that with his death he will be permanently separated from her. Never again he will derive the joy of the passionate and heavenly love. And when he thinks how death will cut him off from the sources of these pleasures, he is filled with despair in life. He feels orphaned and lonely. Life then appears to him to be an illusion. And, finally, love and fame, which he so much aspires to gain and enjoy in life, appear to him to be totally meaningless.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The sonnet, *The Terror of Death* or *When I Have Fears* is imbued with Elizabethan feelings of love of life and fear of death : Elizabethan lyrics of the sixteenth century are full of these themes. Marlowe, Shakespeare, Herrick, Donne and Marvell, to name only the representative poets of the period have all left for us charming lyrics dealing with the wonderous joys of life doomed to be cut short inevitably by death. Keats's this sonnet is therefore in the old Elizabethan tradition.

This should not be taken to mean that the poem is not original, or that it is an imitation of the past lyrics. The sonnet makes its appeal afresh, because it has a true ring of the poet's individual

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sensibility. Life and death are the perennial themes of poetry, and the originality of a poem delineating these themselves in the sincerity of the artist's experience and his handling of language in an individual and personal manner. In fact, it is from the way the language is used we come to know the degree of the poet's sincerity.

It is remarkable that the poet never mentions the word, death. The phrase "cease to be" is far more effective in its suggestion of death, and far more intimate and familiar to us. It is the poet's sincerity of feeling that charges this ordinary, everyday phrase, "cease to be" with an extraordinary force of the idea of death. Then, again, the image of harvest is typically Keatsian and thus original. The pen is compared to the harvesting sickle and the thoughts and experiences of the brain to the corn plants laden with ripe grain sheaves. The work of creation is like harvesting the ripe corn plants. It is a fanciful, romantic image, and suggestive of Keats love for natural objects and scenes of sensuous charm. The image Keats used again with greater charm in the second stanza of Ode to Autumn.

In the second part of the octave, the beauties of nature described are evocative of a sense of romantic wonder and mystery ; the starry night and huge clouds floating about in the sky. A desire to arrest the wonder and mystery in the medium of a work of art is a typically romantic desire ; and to be able to write about them is to communicate with the mysteries of the universe.

In the sestet, he turns to his love and his ownself. From love of his lady and his own love for her, he has derived the greatest pleasures of his life. He has enjoyed "the fairy power of unreflecting love", that is the divine power of passionate love. To Keats, to think that with his death even his love would be no more is intolerably painful.

The two concluding lines state how the thought of death fills him with despair and makes him realise the worthlessness of love and fame even while he lives. Thus the sonnet ends on a tragic note. The thought of death makes him feel already dead in life. The very sources—writing poetry about the mysteries of the Universe, the endless charms of natural beauties, and passionate love—which give him abundant joy in life suddenly, with the thought of death in mind, lose all their appeal and appear worthless. Thus, in its conclusion, if not in other aspects, the poem is an original treatment of the conventional idea.

The sonnet has the structure of a Shakespearean sonnet ; its rhyme-scheme and the isolation of the two rhyming lines at the end to reinforce the conclusive argument are typically Shakespearean features, apart from its theme. But this sonnet of Keats, in comparison, is more intimate and immediate in its appeal ; and, certainly, whereas Shakespeare in his sonnets is more metaphysical, Keats in 'When I Have Fears' is more sharply tragical.

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NOTES

Cease to be—die ;
glean'd—collected ;
high-piled—hugely heaped ;
garners—stores ;
behold—see ;
fair creature of an hour—a short-lived handsome person ;
relish—taste ;
faery power—magical charm ;
to nothingness do sink—are changed into useless state, become useless.

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18

TO ONE WHO HAS BEEN LONG IN CITY PENT

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment ?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by :
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

PARAPHRASE AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This sonnet was composed in June 1816. The opening line is taken from Milton's 'Paradise Lost' Book IX :

'As one who long in populous city pent'.

George Keats, the brother of the poet, wrote in his copy : "Written in the fields—June 1816". The fields obviously are Hampstead Heath and the reference in "Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair" is said to be *Leigh Hunt's* 'Story of Remini', a sentimental story.

This poem illustrates essential features of Keats's early romanticism. As he mentions in one of his letters "O for a life of sensations than of thought," he seems to escape into the life of pure sensations. He develops a sense of disgust with the life of reason, science, technology. He finds it ugly, painful and artificial. So, he escapes into the world of nature and derives ecstatic joy from his sensations of sight, colour, sound and taste—caused by natural beauties. This sonnet illustrates this theme in a very simple manner. He wrote it when he got away from the city to Hampstead Heath, to nature and poetry and when he is in the companionship of a poet. The images he creates in this poem really picture the sensuous experience of the creator. For example, the smile of the blue firmament, the open face of heaven, some pleasant lair of wavy grass etc. The whole experience of the sensuous joys of nature is put into action. It is really beautiful the way Keats personifies and humanizes nature. The picture of a man :

"Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel"

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is just superb. And then in the end the whole action of the poem is brought to a standstill. The one who has long been in a city pent, has been overwhelmed by the open free and sensuous enjoyment and participated in the very existence of nature, now stands watching. He is watching the shiny and majestic clouds sailing in the vast expanse of the sky. The poem ends on a note of sadness—

"He mourns that day so soon has glided by."

To one who has spent most of his life in the city, the freshness, the rolling clouds, the grass and the trees and flowers, the earth, sky and their infinite meaningful changes came really as a surprise. Keats in this sonnet has tried to recreate imaginatively the experience he had at Hampstead Heath. The sonnet is almost Wordsworthian in simplicity.

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19

ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

The poetry of earth is never dead :
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights ; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never :
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one is drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

PARAPHRASE AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This Petrarchan sonnet has a very interesting story about its origin. On December 30th, 1816, Keats and his friend Clarke went out to Hampstead to spend an evening with Leigh Hunt. The talk turning upon crickets, Hunt "proposed to Keats the challenge of writing then, there, a sonnet 'On the Grasshopper and the Cricket." No one was present but myself, and they accordingly set to..... I cannot say how long the trial lasted.....The time however was short for such a performance and Keats won to time." (*Clarke's account*). *Leigh Hunt* admitted that Keats's sonnet was much better than his own.

In this sonnet he gives expression to his conviction that poetry is somehow directly created in the poet's soul by nature. Nature and poetry are one and the same thing. "The poetry of the earth is never dead." Whether it is a bird, a grasshopper, a flower or a bee—anything of nature inspires the poet to create poetry. Keats's own poetry asserts this truth. Writing poetry offers Keats a form of escape from the realities of life. He imaginatively pictures the mystery of man's association with nature. In Keats's mind nature and poetry are identical, therefore to him the poetry of the earth is never dead. Keats's senses were keenly alive to the beauty of natural phenomena. In all the lines of the sonnet he shows that, whatever the season, something is always going on the physical world which appeals to the imagination and senses.

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In the summer season when all the other birds are faint with the heat and are withdrawn into their nests, cooling themselves, there is still a sound animating the whole atmosphere. This voice of the Grasshopper running from hedge to hedge is all prevailing. There is no end to his delight. When tired it takes rest under pleasant weeds. In winter also when snow covers everything and it is silence everywhere, the shrilling sound of the cricket's song in its increasing rhythms is a pleasant and warm company. In that lone hour, to a person, half lost in drowsiness it appears as if the Grasshopper's voice is coming from among some grassy hills.

The line, "On a lone winter evening, when the frost, has brought a silence" is just lovely. It establishes a contrast to the picture of summer luxury presented in the first stanza. The image of the man half lost in drowsiness is typically Keatsian. It reminds one of the drowsy numbness which pains Keats's senses in Ode to the Nightingale. The cricket's song by the stone side in winter and its song in the hedge is reminiscent of Ode to Autumn which has its own music —"The hedge cricket sings." The image of the isolated man is drawn beautifully and is perfectly characteristic of romantic temper.

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20

BRIGHT STAR

BRIGHT star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
Not in lone spendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear tender-taken breath,
And so live ever-or else swoon to death.

PARAPHRASE AND APPRECIATION

Though this sonnet in its present form was written by Keats in a copy of Shakespeare's poems presented by him to Severn on September 28, 1820, it had actually been composed by him in a slightly different version in the spring of 1819. *Colvin* is of the opinion that the date of its composition is somewhere in the last week of February 1819. *Amy Lowell* however insists that it was on or about the 15th of April in 1819, that Keats composed this poem.

In a letter written on June 26th 1818, during his walking trip to Scotland, Keats wrote a sentence which is said to have been incorporated in this poem. It runs, "No, the two (Lake) views we have had, are of the most noble tenderness...they make one forget the divisions of life... and refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open-lidded and steadfast over the wonder of great power."

This sonnet expresses Keats's yearning for ideal human love and hints at his own impending death. When he wrote it in severing copy of Shakespeare, it was almost, though not quite his last piece of writing, his last will and testament. "This is perhaps the only love poem", says *Herford*, "in which passion is attuned to tranquil strain of more unfevered beauty and tenderness or with images of such refreshing and solemn purity."

The poet wants only the steadfastness of the Pole Star but not its loveliness. He wants his beloved's company at the same time.

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Octave of the sonnet is really superb. The picture of the moon with eternal lids apart and its comparison with Nature's patient, sleepless Eramite is lovely. The solitary moon is untiringly watching the waves as they move onwards to wash the shores which are inhabited by human beings. The image of the rising waters in the moon light makes him compare it to the priestlike task of purifying of worshippers in the church.

In the sestet his imagery is very sensuous—
"Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender taken breath."

The poet wants to be always in a state of agitation or intoxication induced by the sweet enjoyment of the charms of the beloved. He wants to enjoy a sort of immortality or else die as if in a swoom. Even in the ode to a Nightingale he says—

"I have been half in love with easeful death."
and
"To cease upon the midnight with no pain."

There is a poignancy of the personal note in the second part of the sonnet. *C. H. Herford* in his book, 'The Age of Wordsworth' rightly says, "He still aspires as in the great odes, towards something steadfast and unchangeable ; but now, when he is at the end of his career, and aware that it is the end, the breathing human passion counts more for him than the love splendour of the star."

In short, this sonnet deals with unfulfilled love and is charged with a passionate and controlled emotion, almost unequalled.

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21
THE HUMAN SEASONS

FOUR seasons fill the measure of the year :
There are four seasons in the mind of man ;
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span :
He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honil'd cud of youthful thought he loves
To ruminate, and by such dreaming nigh
His nearest unto heaven : quiet coves
His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
He furleth close ; contented so to look
On mists in idleness—to let fair things
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.
He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

PARAPHRASE AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This sonnet was first published in Hunt's Literary Pocket Book for 1819, though it was composed on the 13th March 1818, and sent by Keats in a letter to Bailey on the 18th March 1818. In that letter Keats refers to religion as well as Poetry (which he thinks to be a "mere Jack O' lantern" to amuse whosoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance) and end with : "Now my dear fellow, I can never be a seasoner because I care not to be in the right."

In this sonnet, Keats visualises the whole life of man in terms of four seasons. As four seasons characterise a year, so also four seasons characterise the mind of man in his life from birth to death. In his childhood, man has a mind which is like the spring season, full of juicy fruits, blooming flowers, freshness of imagination and flight of fancy. The mind of a young child is extremely fanciful ; it apprehends every object of the world with a sense of wonder and finds beauty in everything that it sees.

Next comes summer in Nature and the youth of man. The summer brings its own pleasures, derived from the spring and achieving full bloom in the summer. So is the youthful mind of man. It takes pleasure in reflecting over the joys of childhood and enjoying the freshness of sensations. This is the time for it to be intoxicated with love of beauty which he discovered in everything in his childhood. This is a phase of man's mind when it attains the heaven in its dream which to it is reality. The joy of heaven is at the back and the call of the youthful mind.

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Autumn too has own pleasures. And the middle-age of man is the autumn of his mind. The fever and fret of youthful mind is past, and now it acquires a quiet, a serenity, an idle contentment. Keats compares the autumn of human mind to a tired bird, now sitting with its wings closed and watching the mists in nature as a spectator. It watches but has no inclination to participate in the activities of the world. Beautiful maidens and exciting events pass by without invoking his mind to yearn for them.

Lastly comes Winter. Winter closes the cycle of seasons in nature. So in the life of a man old age is the phase of winter of his mind. It completes the circle of his life. His body decays and acquires folds and puckers, and his mind loses all its capacity for reflection and fancy. Keats concludes the poem by saying that the decay of the body in old age is only natural. If man had not his old age, he would not have been mortal, subject to death, that he is. Since man is not god, and he is mortal, he must pass through the four phases of childhood, youth, middle-age and old age before he dies.

This sonnet evidently has been written under the influence of Shakespeare's speech in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage", in which man's life is divided into seven stages. But Keats's sonnet is concerned with the mind of man, and that is its distinction.

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22

ON THE SEA

IT keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found,
That scarcely will the very smallest shell
Be mov'd for days from where it sometime fell,
When last the winds of Heaven were unbound.
Oh ye ! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tir'd,
Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea ;
Oh ye ! whose ears are dinn'd with uproar rude,
Or fed too much with cloying melody—
Sit ye near some old Cavern's Mouth, and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea-nymphs quir'd !

PARAPHRASE AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This sonnet, though published in 1848, was written in August 1817, for Keats sent it in a letter written to Reynolds on the 17th August 1817 : "Yesterday I went to Shanklin...(it) is a most beautiful place—sloping wood, and meadow ground reach round the chine, which is a cleft between the cliffs of the depth of nearly 300 feet at least...But the Sea, Jack, the Sea—the little water-fall—then the white cliff...From want of regular rest I have been rather nervous—and the passage in Lear—'Do you not hear the Sea ?' has haunted me immensely".

The sonnet has evidently been inspired by the passage in Shakespeare's King Lear beginning with,

> "Come on Sir ; here is the place : standstill. How fearful and dizzy 'tis to cast ones eyes so low."

But it is the soothing power of the sea that Keats is speaking of and not the dizzy heights above it. Keats says that the sea keeps whispering eternally around lonely shores. Here Keats has tried to create a beautiful effect of sound of the sea waves in their gentle as well as mightly motions. The waves when under the effect of the gravitational pull of the moon, fill the caves with water and then empty them again. It is the soft low pitched sound which is the left behind. Usually the sea, Keats says, is found in such gentle temper that even the smallest of shells keep lying unmoved till the wind blows. Keats

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invites all those people who are tired and troubled, to come and feast their eyes upon the wild expense of the sea. He asks the people who have been admidst the noise of the cities, to come and comfort their ears by the sweet whispering sound of the waves. He asks them to come in the contact of sea, sit near some old cavern's mouth and mediate till they are started back to their senses by the music of the waves as if the sea nymphs sang in a chorus altogether.

This sonnet gives Keats's peculiar feeling for the sea. In the octave he describes its gentle temper, in the sestet we are told that those who are vexed, should feast their eyes on 'the wideness of the sea.'

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23

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

I

O, what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,[1]
Alone and palely loitering ?
The sedge has[2] wither'd from the lake,
And on birds sing.

II

O, what can ail thee, knight-at arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone ?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew ;
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child ;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too and fragrant zone ;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

VI

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long ;
For sidelong[3] would she bend[4], and sing
A faery's song.

In some editions the following variations in the text are found :—

1. Knight-at-arms=Wretched Wight.
2. has=is.
3. sidelong=side-ways.
4. bend=lean.

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VII

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
'I love thee true'.

VIII

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept[5] and sigh'd full sore,[6]
And there I shut her wild sad eyes
With kisses four.[7]

IX

And there she lulled me asleep[8]
And there I dream'd—Ah ! woe betide !
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill-side.

X

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all ;
They cryed[9]—'La Belle Dame Sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall !'

XI

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

XII

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

INTRODUCTION

This little ballad, which is masterpiece of narrative poetry and romantic tenderness was written in 1819, at a time when the poet was himself in a grip of love and death. His spirit of romance and fruitless love occasioned the writing of this poem. This ballad is an allegorical expression of the glamour of sex and the tragic folly of man. It is in a way the tragic story of the poet's own unrealised love. It is charged with supernatural atmosphere, and takes us back to the medieval times of romance and chivalry. It has all the simpli-

5. wept=gazed
6. full sore=deep.
7. with kisses four=so kissed to sleep.
8. she lulled we asleep=we slumber'd on the moss.
9. They cryed=who cry'd.

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city and directness of language, all the qualities of the best old English ballad poetry, and a rare combination of passion and restraint.

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. O armed Knight ! what is that makes you look so worried ? Why are you wandering about alone with pale look in such an extremely cold weather, when even waterside plants have dried up due to extreme chill, and no birds sing, because they have migrated to warmer climates ? It is very unusual for anybody to be moving out in such a cold weather.

Stanza 2. Tell me, O armed Knight ! what makes you look so afflicted, so wild, and so sad ? The weather is very dreary and unit for anybody to be out of doors. The two interesting signs of good weather, the squirrels running about and the activity of harvesting, are missing. The squirrel does not stir out, because it has already filled up her store with food for the winter. The harvest, too, is over before the coming of winter. How is it then that you alone are roaming about in such biting cold ?

Stanza 3. Your face looks white and bloodless like a white lily, and is perspiring, as if, due to some mental excitemet, like the face of one in high fever. The rosy colour of your youthful cheeks has almost completely faded away. Why is it so ?

Stanza 4. The Knight's answer explaining the cause of his affliction : I met a lovely lady in the meadows. Her beauty was not earthly. It was the beauty of supernatural lady of exquisite charm. She looked as beautiful as a fairy's child. Her hair was long. Her pace was quick and graceful, and her eyes were so wild and fascinating as to make one mad.

Stanza 5. I was so charmed by her beauty that I made a garland of flowers for her head bracelets of flowers for her wrists, and a belt of fragrant for her waist. I presented these to her and in return she looked at me with loving eyes, and sighted and moaned sweetly, as if, to show that she too loved me.

Stanza 6. Then I lifted her up and placed her in front of myself on my horse. All the day I gazed at her beauty and saw nothing else, for all the way she turned her face towards me and sang a fairy's song.

Stanza 7. Besides, as a token of her love for me, on the way she gave me sweet eatable roots, forest honey, and other delicious food to eat, and in a strange but clearly indicative language she assured me of her true love for me.

Stanza 8. She took me to her fairy cave and there she wept and sighed bitterly, as if, to show that she was desperately in love with me, and feared being deserted by me. I, too, kissed her charming and

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tearful eyes with a number of kisses, just to assure her of the constancy of my love.

Stanza 9. There she lulled me to sleep, and then I saw a tragic dream the latest I ever dreamt on the cold hill-side.

Stanza 10. In that horrible dream I saw Kings, Princes and Warriors, whose faces were ghastly pale like those of dead bodies. They were all crying to me that the lady without mercy had enslaved and made me her victim, as she had made them earlier.

Stanza 11. In the dim light of the cave, I saw the pitiable condition of these victim of the fairy's false treacherous love. I saw their love-thirsty lips wide open, as if, to sound a horrible warning to me against the dangerous witchery of the treacherous lady. In horror, I awoke from my dream, and found myself on the cold hill-side, a love-sick victim of that beauty.

Stanza 12. That is the reason of my pale looks and my wandering about lazily and all alone in this bitter cold weather, when even the water-side plants are dried up and birds have migrated to warmer climate due to the biting chill of this place.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date of Composition

The exact date of composition of his poem is not known. But it is certain that it was written in 1819. There are two versions of it —the earlier (which is prescribed) in Keats's letter to George and Georgiana Keats—his brother and brother's wife, dated April 28, 1819, and the latter in Leigh Hunt's *Indicator* for May, 1820.

Background

The idea of writing a poem with the title "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" seems to have been suggested to him by an English translation made by Sir Richard Ross of an old poem of the same title and in Provincial French written by Allain Chartier, a dull fifteenth century French poet. It was written three or four months after the death in Dec. 1818 of his brother Tom, whom he had loved devotedly and himself nursed to the end. It seems to have been inspired at a time when he himself was in the grip of love and death. He had already met Fanny Brawne, a frivolous girl, after the death of Tom, and had fallen deeply in love with her. Moreover, the signs of his fatal disease, consumption, had also become obvious to him by the time he wrote this poem. Thus, his romance with Fanny Brawne and his prevision of impossibility of fulfilling his romance due to his fatal disease inspired him to write this poem. Taken as such, this poem is an allegorical expression of Keats and a desperate struggle to conquer love and death. It symbolizes the tragedy of man, which he invites upon himself by his own folloy of becoming a victim of the glamour of sex. Keats shows it to us through the tragedy of a medieval knight-errant,

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who is bewitched and victimised by the treacherous feminine charms of a fairy of the elfland. Thus, the atmosphere of this poem is thoroughly charged with medieval romance and knight-errantry, the supernatural, and the highest tragic imagination. As a ballads, it is perfect, because it has all the good qualities of the best old ballads of English poetry. Its language has all the simplicity and directness of good old ballads. Its emotion, too, is simple, and the poem is a fine example of combined passion and restraint. The narrative is straight and interesting with an appropriate natural background.

Theme and Substance

The theme of the poem is the unfulfilled love of a medieval knight-at-arms. Thus the poem deals with frustrated love. The poet asks why the knight is looking so pale, wild and sad, and wandering about all alone in such a biting winter, when due to extreme chill the water-side plants have dried up, the birds have migrated to warmer climates, even the squirrel does not stir out, for it has filled up its store with food for the winter, and the harvest time is over. Explaining the reason, the knight says that he has been captivated by the bewitching charms of a lady with long hair, graceful pace and wild eyes. He says that he presented to her a garland for the head, and bracelets, and a belt—all made of fragrant flowers. She, too, responded to his love with sighs and meanings. He placed her on his horse, and all along the way he gazed at her beauty, and she looked at him and sang a fairy's song. On the way, she gave him sweet roots and other delicious foods, and asssured him of her love for him. Then she took him to fairy cave and there wept and sighed in fear for being deserted by him. But with many kisses upon her tearful eyes he assured her of his contancy. Thereafter, she lulled him to sleep, and he saw a horrible dream, in which he saw Kings, Princes and Warriors—all with pale and ghastly faces—crying to him that the merciless lady had victimised him with her treacherous charms as she had victimised him with her treacherous charms as she had enslaved them. In horror he awoke and found himself heart broken by the cold hill-side. This, he says, is the reason of his pale and wild looks and his wandering about, alone in such a biting winter.

Autobiographical Element

Critics have found autobiographical element in the poem. The merciless lady referred to in the poem is Fanny Brawne. The mood of disappointment and gloom is caused probably by Keats's frustration in love, the death of his brother Tom and awareness of his own fatal disease. But a critic (Amy Lovel) finds no autobiographical element in the poem.

Analysis

(i) In the first three stanzas the poet asks why the knight-at-arms is looking so pale, wild and woe-begone, and in doing so paints a dreary background of black winter as a preparation for the following tragedy.

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(ii) The next five stanzas describe how the knight is captivated by the bewitching beauty of a fairy-like lady, and now she entraps him by her love and charms, and finally takes him to her cave.

(iii) The next three stanzas describe the knight's horrible dream, in which he sees pale Kings, Princes and Warriors, all of whom are the lady's victims like himself. When his dream breaks, he finds himself heart-broken by the cold hill-side, where no birds sing.

(iv) The last stanza concludes the knight's explanation.

[Please also see answer to Question No. 1 at the end of this poem.]

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

Title—*La Belle Dame Sans Merci.* (French) : The beautiful lady without mercy.

Stanza 1.

What—What mishap or suffering. *Ail*—Trouble, afflict. *Knight-at-arms*—A brave and fully armed knight of the middle ages, who wandered about in search of adventures. 'Knight' is a medieval term, meaning a military attendant, particularly one serving a lady, or a champion in a war or tournament. *Palely loitering*—Looking pale-faced and roaming about idly and aimlessly. The adverb 'palely' should be taken as an adjective—'pale', qualifying the noun 'knight', and not as an adverb modifying loitering. *Sedge*—A coarse grass growing in tufts by the water-side. *Withered*—Dried up ; become dead due to the extreme cold of winter. *No birds sing*—Because, due to the extreme chill of the place, the birds have migrated to warmer regions, and there is no bird left there. Note that the third and the fourth lines are highly suggesive. Biting winter is suggested without mentioning the word 'winter'. The withered sedge and the absence of birds have been employed to suggest the winter. What the poet wants to signify in these two lines is that the weather being one of extreme winter, it is not the proper time for anybody to be moving about out of doors. The Knight's wandering about in much cold is therefore, naturally very surprising. That is why the poet is so curious to know the reason of it. Secondly, in these two lines, he paints a bleak and dreary atmosphere as fitting background to the tragic event that is to follow, and to prepare the reader's mind for it.

Explanation—In his imagination, the poet flies back to the medieval time and sees a fully armed knight with pale and wild looks, wandering about alone and idly by the side of a lake in extremely cold weather. The weather is so cold and biting that even the water-side plants have become dead and the birds have migrated to warmer regions, and it is not at all the proper time for anybody to remain out of doors. The knight's wandering about thus in such a cold weather appears very unusual to the poet. That is why, he is so curious to know the cause of it. The last two lines are highly sugges-

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tive. They suggest extreme winter, as well as the dreariness of the atmosphere as a fitting background to the coming tragic story.

Stanza 2.

O what.....at arms?—Mark this repetition of the first stanza. It has been repeated here to emphasise the poet's curiosity at the knight's pale looks and lonely wanderings in such an extreme winter when nobody would stir out of doors. *So haggard*—so wild-looking as a result of fatigue and anxiety; looking so afflicted and worried. So woe-begone-miserable and sad. *Squirrel*—an interesting and very active tiny rodent (i. e, having strong front teeth, but no canines). *Granary*—the squirrel's store of food. *Is full*—has been filled up with food for the winter, when due to extreme cold and snow, etc., the squirrel cannot go out in search of food and, moreover, there is no food anywhere in the fields, etc. *Harvest's done*—the interesting activity of harvesting is over before the coming of winter, so that in winter there is a dreary loneliness and absence of activity everywhere. The last two lines of this stanza are again very suggestive. The squirrel and harvesting are two interesting sights in the fields, indicating that the weather is favourable for all people and other creatures to move out of door and be engaged in their various profitable activities. The suggest the gaiety of the weather and prosperity; and the absence of them, as here, suggests a dreary atmosphere and scarcity of everything.

Explanation—The poet's curiosity to know why the knight is wandering about, so pale and afflicted, and in such an extremely cold weather, seems to be very great. He reasserts it in the present stanza and is eager to know why the knight-at-arms, who is looking to be afflicted, so wild, and so miserable, is wandering about in such an extremely cold and dreary weather, when even the squirrel stays within doors after having filled up its store with food for the winter, and there is no harvesting activity outside in the fields. It is very uncommon for anybody to be moving out of doors in such a dreary and bleak weather. There must be some very unusual affliction troubling the knight, that has compelled him to be thus wandering about. What it is that the poet wants to know.

Stanza 3.

A lily—a lily-like whiteness *as* of the blood less or anaemic state, of a person in extreme fear. *Brow-fore*—head, or face. *With anguish moist*...heavily perspiring due to extreme mental unrest. *Fever dew*—with little drops of sweet upon the face due to intense mental agony or high mental excitement, as of a person in high fever. 'Fever' is often referred to in his poems written after Tom's death. It is continually haunting his mind ever since then. *A fading rose*—the rosy or reddish colour of youthful cheeks that is fast disappearing due to mental agony. Note the figure of metonymy—the rose has been used in place of the rosy colour. *Fast withered*—is fastly fading away. (Mark the apt and beautiful metaphors—'a lily on the brow'; 'fever dew' and 'a fading rose')

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Explanation—After expressing his own curiosity at the miserable sight of the knight in the first two stanzas the poet describes in the present stanza the excited mental condition and bloodless appearance of the knight. The poet sees that the knight's forehead looks bloodless and white like a lily, and perspiring heavily, as if, due to, some great mental excitement like a person in very high fever. He finds, moreover, that even the youthful reddish colour of the young knight's cheeks has almost disappeared and what little of it remains is fast fading away from his cheeks. He discovers all this pitiable condition of the knight, as if the knight was not aware of it, and wanted to know the cause of it from him.

Stanza 4.

Meads—meadows : grassy field. *Full beautiful*—extremely beautiful in the respects of rare and exquisite charms. *A fairy's child*—not a mortal woman, but a supernatural lady of exquisite beauty. *Her foot was light*—her pace was quick and graceful. *Wild*—passionate and, therefore, strangely fascinating.

Explanation—In this stanza the knight answers the poet's question and describes the lady who captivated his heart by her bewitching beauty, and thus explains the cause of his affliction. He says that he met a lady in the meadows, who was extremely beautiful—not a mortal woman, but a super-natural lady of rare and exquisite charm. Her hair was gracefully long. Her pace was quick and elegant, and her eyes were passionate and strangely fascinating. Here we see Keats's mastery in her portraiture ; and his cult ; 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.'

Stanza 5.

Garland—of fragrant flowers. *Bracelets*—ornamental bands for the wrists. *Fragrant zone*—ornamental belt made of fragrant flowers for ladies. *As*—as if. *Did love*—loved undoubtedly. *Made sweet moan*—moaned in a sweet and loving manner, with long low murmurs as if, too ardently, and he did not care for her love.

Explanation—In this stanza, the knight says that charmed by lady's beauty, he made a garland to decorate her head, a pair of bracelets for her lovely wrists, and an ornamental belt for her delicate waist, and that all these were made of sweet smelling flowers, so as to be in keeping with the tenderness of her body. As he offered these tender tokens of his love to her, she too in return looked at him with sweet loving looks and softly sighed and murmured as if she also loved him no less.

Stanza 6.

Pacing steed—moving horse.

Explanation—Then the knight lifted her up and placed her in front of himself on his horse. All the day he gazed at her beauty and saw nothing else, for all the way she turned her face towards him and sang a fairy's song.

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Stanza 7.

Found me—brought for me. *Roots*—eatable roots. *Relish sweet*—sweet or delicious taste. *Relish*—taste. *Honey wild*—forest honey. *Manna dew*—sweet juice from plants like manna-ash, etc. 'Honey wild' and 'manna dew' are referred to in the Bible as the food of the gods. The lady entertained the knight with such delicious foods to show that she entertained deep feelings of love for him. *Language strange*—Because it was the language of a fairy, which the Knight could not understand. But he could clearly understand from her loving looks and gestures that she was declaring her true and ardent love for him.

Explanation—When the Knight was carrying the lady with him on his horse, on the way she gave him eatable roots of sweet taste, as well as, forest honey and sweet juice of manna-ash and other plants to eat. She entertained him with these things to show that she loved him, but in her fairy language she said that she was in true love with him. The Knight could not understand her language, but he clearly understood from her loving looks and gestures that she was declaring her true love for him.

Stanza 8.

Elfin grot—fairy-cave. 'Grot' means grotto, i. e., picturesque but artificial ornamental cave. *Full sore*—as an expression of pain. *She wept.....sore*—She wept bitterly and sighed again and again to show that she desperately loved him, and feared that he might desert her. But her weeping and sighing was nothing but a play-acting, for she was a wicked lady and only wanted to seduce the Knight. *Shut*—caused to be closed. *Wild eyes*—the extremely passionate eyes, which had begun to appear all the more passionate due to her weeping. *I shut.....kisses four*—he had kissed her a number of times upon her tearful eyes to assure her of his constancy, to convince her that he would never leave her. She must have shut her eyes, not because she felt any blissfulness of his passionate kisses, but because no one can keep the eyes open when kissess are being stamped upon them by the lips, or when any pressure falls upon them. She cannot be expected to have felt any blissfulness in his kisses, because she was wicked and without any personal feelings for him and she only wanted to seduce him. *Kisses four*—Keats sent this poem in his own hand in a letter to his brother, George and his wife under the date Wednesday evening, April 28, 1819. In this letter he explains the significance of 'Kisses-four', thus : "Why four kisses—you will say —why four, because I wish to restrain the headlong impetuosity of my Muse—she would have fain said "score" without hurting the rhyme, but must temper the imagination, as the critics say, with judgement. I was obliged to choose an even number, that both eyes might have fair play, and to speak truly, I think to apiece quite sufficient. Suppose I had said seven, there would have been three and a half, apiece—a very awkward affiar, and we got out of on my side."

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Explanation—Entertaining the Knight with sweet roots and juices etc., on the way, and professing her love for him, she took him to her well-decorated fairy-cave. There she wept bitterly in love with him, and feared that he might desert her. The Knight says that he assured her of his constancy and allayed her vague fears by kissing a number of time upon her passionate and tearful eyes.

Stanza 9.

Lulled me asleep—Soothed me into sleep by her fond caresses. *Ah woe betide*—Ah, how sad and painful ; *Latest*—last.

Explanation—In her cave, the lady lulled the Knight into sleep. In his sleep he saw a sad and painful dream, the last dream that he saw on the cold hill-side.

Stanza 10.

Pale kings.....warriors—The Kings, Princes and Warriors whom he saw in his dream, looked pale and bloodless, because they were the victims of the lady's captivating beauty and she had enslaved them by her treacherous charms. *Death pale*—As pale and bloodless as dead bodies. *Thrall*—captivity ; bondage. *Thee hath in thrall*—The prose order would be—Hath thee in thrall, meaning that she had enslaved the Knight.

Explanation—While asleep in the fairy-cave, the Knight saw a horrible dream, in which he was ghastly pale Kings, Princes, and Warriors—all of them victims of the wiles of that treacherous beauty. He heard them crying to him that beautiful lady without mercy had taken him in her bondage, as she had enslaved them earlier. Here Kings and Princes etc., represent the people of the highest classes, and Keats wants to show that even these highest people are not free from the wiles of feminine charms. In fact, suggests Keats, it is a tragic exprience, from which nobody in the world is free. Thus, Keats shows here the pitiable condition of the victims of the lady's treacherous and false love.

Stanza 11.

Starved lips—Dried up lips, as if, due to starvation ; but they were love-sick lips. *Gloom*—Faint light inside the cave. *With horrid warning*—In a gesture of warning against the horror of the place. *Gaped wide*—Were wide open, but speechless due to fear, for they could not speak due to the magic spell the lady had cast upon them. *Awoke*—from the dream. *Me*—Myself.

Explanation—Here again the Knight describes the horrible looks of the Kings, Princes and Warriors, whom he saw in the cave. He says that in the faint light inside the cave he saw their parched and love-lorn lips, wide open and speechless, as if silently warning the Knight against the horrors of the place. Shocked by such a horrible sight, the Knight says, he awoke from his dream and found himself lying on the cold hill-side. The pictures condensed in the phrases "horried warning" and "gaped wide" are very beautiful indeed.

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Stanza 12

Sojourn—stay.

Explanation—This stanza concludes the Knight's answer to the poet's question in the first three stanzas. This is the reason of my pale looks and my wandering about lazily and all alone in this bitter cold weather, when even the water-side plants are dried up and birds have migrated to warmer climates due to the biting chill of this place.

CRITICAL OPINIONS ON THE POEM

1. Ede Selincourt

"In La Belle Dame, the medieval revival reaches its culmination. The depth of passion which it expresses or rather implies (for there is not the least suspicion of raising), the intense lyrical feeling (though the poet's personality is absolutely merged in the dramatic conception), the exquisite art by which every detail of the weird landscape and every cadence of the wild but subtle melody contributes to the general effect of mystery and desolation, produce together an effect unequalled in the poetry of romance."

2. Sidney Colvin

"Note the effect of the last verse. It is not a repetition of the first, for it is not a question. The question has been answered. The tale has been told. We are back to the lake, the withered sedge, the silent birds and the knight alone and palely loitering."

3. Stopford A. Brooke

"It is a beautiful fantastic thing and underlines the skill with which each verse, closed by a line of four strong syllables, accents each step of the mystery."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. 1. Give a critical estimate of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

Ans. "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is undoubtedly one of the finest poems of Keats. It was written in 1819, a few months after the death of his brother, Tom, whose painful memory was still fresh in his mind. Just about this time, too, he had become painfully aware of his fatal disease, and had fallen deeply in love with a beautiful young girl, Fanny Brawne. He did not hope for the fulfiment of his love due to his failing health. It was under the force of such romantic and painful circumstances that he was inspired to write this poem. That is why, its narrative is thoroughly full of emotion, but because it was written in his period of poetic maturity, its emotion is well-restrained. It is, thus, a fine and well balanced product of his poetic genius.

(i) Its Romantic and Supernatural Theme : *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is one of the most romantic poems of Keats and, in fact, one of the finest of English romantic poems. It may well be compared with his other romantic poems : *The Eve of St. Agnes, Isabella* and

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Lamia. In these other poems, the effect is largely attained by rich description of detail. But in this poem he has achieved masterly romantic effects by restraint and suggestion. It is thoroughly romantic in all respects. (a) Its theme takes us back to the remote medieval times of knight-errantry and enchantment. It narrates that tragic story of the unrealised love of a knight-at-arms, who has been captivated by the bewitching beauty of an elf in a vague and enchanted land. (b) The knight's gallantry and quest for adventure, disappointment in love due to the treacherous wiles of his lady-love, his wandering about with pale and haggard looks in a dreary cold weather in quest of the beauty of his shattered dream, his vision of the weird array of ghastly and death-pale Kings and Princes etc. in the elfin grotto—all these medieval and supernatural elements are thoroughly romantic. The treatment of the theme shows Keats's tragic imagination at its best.

(ii) *As a Ballad* : This poem is a perfect ballad, for it possesses all the qualities of good ballad poetry. Like the theme of old ballads, the theme of this poem is chivalry and romance leading to a tragic end. Its narrative is simple and direct, with a romantic tenderness and simplicity of emotion. Its language has all the simplicity and directness of good ballads. The atmosphere in the poem is dreary and weird and, therefore, perfect in keeping with its tragic theme. The incident of the story is not very interesting or breath-taking but it has all the beauty in its simplicity. It is abruptly introduced and graphically narrated. It has all the desired romantic effect, although it has none of the rich embellishments of detail. Its emotion is very well restrained.

(iii) *Its Restraint and Suggestiveness* : This poem is particularly notable for the rare combination in it of passion and restraint. Unlike his other narrative poems, this poem is free from the burden of many details. Instead of creating the desired romantic effect with richness of details, the poet has produced it by the use of restraint and suggestiveness. There are so many instances in it of restrained and suggestive images. First of all the emotions of love and disappointment are well-controlled. Nowhere does the Knight make loud effusions of love and, even heart-broken, he only loiters about, quiet pale and woe-begone by the cold hill-side. Pictorial effects, which are plentiful in this poem are similarly created by a few suggestive strokes. There are many condensed pictures in it. Take the example of the pictures of winter with which both *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and *The Eve of St. Agnes* begin. The picture of winter in the latter poem is amplified through two long stanzas. But in this ballad, the entire description of winter is compressed into two short lines :

> 'The sedge is withered from the Lake,
> And no birds sing.'

The Knight's love-sick appearance is condensed in two short metaphorical lines : 'a lily on thy brow' and 'on thy cheeks a fading

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rose.' Again, the pictures of "starv'd lips", "with horrid warning gaped wide" amply suggest the tragic pathos in the helpless plight of the Kings and Princes, etc.

Another attractive feature of this poem, which comes under the heading of suggestiveness, is its allegorical expression of the poet's own struggle to conquer Love and Death. His consciousness of his fatal disease, his fruitless love for Fanny Brawne, and his sense of loneliness in the world are all clearly suggested by the theme of this poem. One might almost say that this ballad is an allegory on the glamour of the fair sex and the tragic folly of man. It suggests the universal tragedy of menfolk, who fall victims to the wiles and charms of false feminine beauties, and are completely ruined as a result of it. In this poem, the poet invites us to see this tragedy through the eyes of the bewitched knight, with whom we naturally sympathise.

(iv) *Its Style and Form* : This little masterpiece of narrative poetry is perfect in its style and form. As a ballad it has all the qualities of good ballads. Its simplicity and directness are particularly notable. Its language is simple, and its emotion has no complexity. There is in it a rare combination of passion and restraint. Keats has consciously avoided the use of unbridled emotion and imagination in this poem. His own comment on this poem is : "I was to restrain the headlong impetuosity of my Muse." and "we must temper the Imagination, as the critics say, with judgment." The images are highly suggestive. The romantic and supernatural elements are nicely blended together. The ballad form is carefully maintained. It consists of short and simple four-line stanzas, in each of which the first, second and third lines are iambic tetrameter, the fourth line is iambic diameter, and only the second and fourth lines rhyme. The music of the verses has a rare pensive sweetness throughout. Rare musical effects are created by a clever use of alliteration repetition and appropriate vowel sounds. The alliteration of the sound of 'f' in stanza 4, line 2, and of the sibilant 's' sound in the line : "And sure in language strange she said." and in the line : 'And there she wept and sigh'd full sore' and of the liquid "l" sound in the whole of the 10th stanza—and the repetition of the word 'pale' in this very stanza—all these are instances of good musical effects. A few of the other musical combinations of words are : 'fragrant of zone', 'bend and sing', 'honey wild and manna dew,' 'cold hill', 'Alone and palely loitering' etc.

In short, for picturesqueness, for romantic beauty, wealth of imagination, rare simplicity, and effectiveness in spite of simplicity, and sensuous and suggestive images, this poem is an exquisitely beautiful piece, and has hardly any equal.

Q. 2. What elements of romantic beauty do you find in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" ?

Ans. *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is a thoroughly romantic poem. It is perfectly romantic in spirit and atmosphere, but there

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is a classical restraint and simplicity in its realistic form and style. On the whole, one of its greatest characteristics Keats's romantic imagination or romantic tenderness, is eminently displayed here. Its romantic beauty consists of its atmosphere of the remote medieval past, its vague, supernatural and dream-like atmosphere, its mastery and strangeness, its intense romatnic passion, its utter despair and desolation, and its richness and profusion of colour and sensuous imagery.

(i) *Its Medieval Romance* : The poem is full of the spirit of medieval romance and chivalry. It takes us back to the medieval times of Knight errantry, love and adventure. This drifting away from the present and harking back to the medieval past in search of beauty, is in essence a romantic quest for beauty, a romance of wonder for the past and the distant. Its subject is love, "All daring, all enduring, faithful upto death." This kind of chivalry and spirit of self-effacement for the sake of Love, which is beautifully presented in this poem, is essentially romantic in spirit.

(ii) *Its Supernatural Atmosphere* : If Romanticism is strangeness added to beauty, as Pater defines it, this poem is the best as example of it. Strangeness has been added here to the beautiful theme of tragic love. The idea of the lady who lured and enticed her lovers by her treacherous charms into her fatal cave is adopted from the medieval legend of Venus, the goddess of love presiding in a court of love built upon a mountain. According to this legend, men were now and then permitted to visit this court of Love, but only on the risk of eternal bondage. In place of this goddess of Love, Keats substitutes a Fairy's child, the beautiful lady without mercy, who lures Kings, Princes and Knights into her eternal captivity. The blending of medieval romance and Knight-errantry with this weird, supernatural and tragic legend has definitely imparted a romantic strangeness and beauty to this poem. The meeting of the Knight with a lady in the Meads, a fairy's child, who sang a fairy's song to him, and found him, "honey wild" and "manna dew," and spoke in a "language strange," and took him to her elfin-grotto, and there lured and enthralled him with her "wild eyes"—all these and the Knight's vision in his dream of the horrid sight of the Lady's "death pale" victims are essentially weird and supernatural, and impart a romantic strangeness and beauty to the poem.

(iii) *Its Tragic Pathos* : The sense of the utter despair and desolation pervades the whole poem and is the very keynote of it. The utter waste and frustration caused by the tragic element in love, and the wild and unquenchable passion, of the Knight in spite of his tragic frustration is essentially romantic. The picture of the Knight "alone and palely loitering", "haggard and woe-begone", in a bleak and dreary weather when "no birds sing", and enthralled by the wild Lady's wiles and cast into the gloom of her elfin-grotto in the midst of her other pale victims, is full of tragic pathos. From

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the Knight's unquenched and unquenchable passion it appears that he would never cease to wander about in quest of the beauty of his dream that has robbed his heart away. This desperate search for lost visions of beauty, against the heavy odds of utter despair and desolation, this hoping against hope for an ideal beauty, is truly romantic indeed.

(iv) *Its Sensuous Beauty* : Another important aspect of romantic beauty in this poem is that of its sensuous colours and imagery. There is first the dreary atmosphere of extreme winter, when the sedge has withered and the squirrel's granary is full. Then there is the picture of the haggard and woe-begone knight, with a 'lily' and 'anguish moist and fever dew' on his 'brow', and fading rose on his cheeks. There is, then, the Lady, with long hair and light foot, whom the knight decorates with fragrant garlands, bracelets, and who in turn entertains him with sweet root, "honey wild and manna dew." Lastly, there is the "elfin—grot" in the gloom of which the Knight sees pale Kings and Princes, with their starved lips gaping wide with "hoorid warning." All these are sensuous and romantic images, and impart romantic charm to the poem.

These are the elements of romantic beauty in this poem. Only its style is realistic and it has a rare simplicity and directness, which make it so readily appealing and effective. But its realistic style is happily blended with its romantic atmosphere, and this combination makes this poem a piece of rare beauty.

Q. 3. Write a note on the supernatural element in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci", and say what effect has Keats achieved by it in this poem ?

Ans. Please refer to section (ii) of Q. 2 above.

Q. 4. What is the key-note of the poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," and by what devices has Keats achieved it in this poem ?

Or

Write a note on the element of tragic pathos in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

Ans. To section (ii) of Q. 1, which describes the kenynote of this poem—tragic pathos, please add the following note on Keats's devices to achieve it.

This effect of the sense of utter despair and desolation resulting from the failure of romontic passion is remarkably achieved by Keats by the devices of repetition and contrast.

The pathos and mystery of the univesal theme of frustrated love have, in the first place, been created by the repetition of a single image, or a single line anain and again, so that the feeling of utter [illegible] and gloom may be very well hammered into the reader's mind. Ballads often treat of tragic love, and this device of repetition

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is frequently employed, to create tragic effects. Repetitions in the poem are frequent and poignant. Utter desolation, which results from the mercilessness of treacherous beauties and unfulfilled love, forms the very refrain of this poem. This key-emotion is directly and forcefully conveyed by the pitiable image of the pale knight-at-arms, in the following lines of the first stanza :

'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms
Alone and palely loitering ?'

The same image is repeated in the second stanza,

'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard, and so, woe-begone ?'

This paleness and sadness of the knight is hammered again in the third stanza in the image of a 'lily' on thy brow 'with anguish moist and fever dew' and a 'fading rose, on his cheeks'. The poet carries this idea of paleness to its climax, by repeating it three times in the tenth stanza, thus :

'I saw pale Kings, and Princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all.'

Moreover, the last stanza is a repetition of the first, re-empasising the tragic paleness, and lonely wandering of the Knight. Thus, we see how frequently Keats repeats the same image of the knight, and successfully achieves by it the desired intensity of tragic passion.

Another good instance of repetition for creating the effect of gloom and dreary desolation is found in the repetition of whole lines in the first and the last stanzas :

"And the sedge has withered from the Lake
And no birds sing."

The same picture of desolation is emphasised in the lines :

"The squirrel's granary is full
And the harvest 's done."

Thus, we see that the effect of unquenchable passion and tragic pathos is remarkably achieved by Keats by the device of repetition.

This very effect of utter gloom and desolation, resulting from the failure of romantic love is further heightened by Keats by the device of contrast. He heightens the wasting and moral power of frustrated love by painting the Knight's gloom and desolation against the sunny background of a brief fulfilment and hope. He intensifies the poignancy and pathos of frustrated love by placing in a clear contrast the seeming fulfilment and real frustration of romantic passion. The little ray of the hope of fulfilment, that flashes but for a moment during the Knight's romantic adventure and then disappears, makes the succeeding gloom much darker and more terrible, than it would be without the brief flash of hope.

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In the first three stanzas, the poet presents the Knight as wandering all alone, pale and woe-begone in the midst of a dreary and desolate landscape, which corresponds to his own inner desolation. This desolation and gloom is suddenly followed by a brief hope of fulfilment and joy. In this short and blissful integral of the Knight's meeting with the lovely Lady, "a fairy's child", he is transported from his dreary romantic love, and sweet love-song. During these moments, (Stanza 4-8), even the merciless Lady is thoroughly kind, hospitable and passionately responsive to the Knight's love. She is all—dying for him. In the seclusion of the elfin-grotto he passes his happiest moments with her. He decorates her with garlands, bracelets and a zone of fragrant flowers. He has the pleasure of riding with her on his own horse. He wooes her with his canstant gaze at her lovely beauty, and she in return wooes him with her wild eyes, her sweet moan, and her fairy's songs. She entertains him with sweet roots, 'honey wild and manna dew,' and professes true love for him. In her grotto, she sighs and weeps bitterly in fear of being deserted by him. The thrill and climax of his short-lived joy comes when he kisses her "wild eyes" to assure her of his constancy and then is lulled by her to sleep.

The darkness of sleep envelops and obliterates the short-lived brightness of his heavenly experience. His blissful dream is gone, and in its place he sees a horrible dream, a ghastly nightmare. Frightened by it, he wakes up and finds himself hurled into complete disillusionment and real desolation by the side of the cold hill, from which there is no getting away.

Thus, the poem begins with disolution and ends with a greater desolation. The brief interval of joy and hope placed for the sake of contrast between the gloomy beginning and the gloomier end greatly deepens gloom and desolation of the poem. But for this brief flash of joy and hope in the middle of the poem, the enveloping gloom desolation would not be as horrible as it is. All great poets use the Shakespearean device of contrast to heighten the effect of joy or sorrow, hope or despair, on the principle that a fitful flash of lightening leaves the night darker and blacker. Keats has employed it with great skill and effectiveness. The utter gloom and desolation created by him by this device is terrible and unforgettable. It shows Keats's highest tragic imagination.

Q. 5. Write a note on the Symbolism in La Belle Dame Sans Merci.

Ans. Besides being a thing of beauty and joy for ever, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is full of symbolism and suggestiveness.

It is not merely the story of a love-lorn Knight's unfulfilled love. His story of tragic passion is the story of all of us. It symbolises the universal theme that, like the knight, all of us wander about in the world, pale and woe-begone, in search for lost visions, and find life a bitter-sweet experience.

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Secondly, the poem may also be said to symbolise Keats' own sense of desolation and his life-long wanderings in the rich realms of imagination in search of Beauty and Truth. It suggests his own frustration resulting from his imperfect achievement of his ideal of Beauty.

Thirdly, it seems to symbolise the possible emotion of his own sense of utter despair of the non-fulfilment of his romantic passion for Fanny Brawne. He was aware of his fatal disease, as well as, of the frivolous nature of Fanny Brawne. Hence, he was certain that his love would remain unfulfilled. This seems to have been at the back of his mind at the time of writing this poem. At least, the circumstances of his romance and its resulting frustration and desolation are almost similar to those of the Knight. Keats's love for Fanny Brawne, whatever her response, remained to the last "All daring, all enduring, faithful unto death," very much like that of the Knight.

Moreover, the Lady without mercy is a figure of the greatest symbolical significance in the poem. She symbolises the wasting and mortal power of tragic passion. She symbolises the tragic element in love, love which becomes a curse rather than a blessing due to unfavourable circumstances or due to the heartlessness of a lady. The desolation and despair, to which such tragic love invariably leads, is a universal experience, common to humanity in all times and places. The merciless Lady's symbolic character is suggested by her mysterious, wanton, and merciless nature. She is presented as a "fairy's child", with wild eyes and speaking a "language strange". She does not represent a real or mortal woman. The symbolises the fatality of love.

Lastly, there are many other minor symbols in the poem. The lily and the fading rose in the third stanza represent the paleness and withering youth of a love-lorn and disappointed lover. The grotto, the the wild honey and manna dew symbolize the fatal and irresistible allurements of tragic love and the treacherous of false beauty.

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24
MEG MERRILIES

I

OLD MEG She was a Gipsy,
And liv'd upon the Moors :
Her bed it was the brown heath turf,
And her house was out of doors.

II

Her apples were swart blackberries,
Her currants pods o' broom ;
Her wine was dew of the wild white rose,
Her book a churchyard tomb.

III

Her Brothers were the craggy hills,
Her Sisters larchen trees—
Alone with her great family
She liv'd as she did please.

IV

No breakfast had she many a morn,
No dinner many a noon,
And 'stead of supper she would stare
Full hard against the Moon.

V

But every morn of woodbine fresh
She made her garlanding,
And every night the dark glen Yew
She wove, and she would sing.

VI

And with her fingers old and brown
She plaited Mats o' Rushes,
And gave them to the Cottagers
She met among the Bushes.

VII

Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen
And tall as Amazon :
An old red blanket cloak she wore ;
A chip hat had she on.
God rest her aged bones somewhere—
She died full long agone !

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PARAPHRASE AND COMMENTARY

Soon after the publication of *Endymion* and before the appearance of the reviews, Keats and his friend Charles Armitage Brown left for a walking tour in Scotland. At Dumfries they saw the house of Robert Burns and his grave. He entered next the country of Meg Merrilies. To this tour we owe his sonnet *On Visiting the Tomb of Burns* and a charming ballad, *Meg Merrilies*. So this ballad, *Meg Merrilies*, belongs to his happier days when he had not known that he was suffering from a fatal disease, his brother was alive, and he had not been deceived so much as in latter life. Hence it is free from his usual pangs of melancholy and pain.

The poem *Meg Merrilies* is about a Gipsy girl who lived upon the moors. She slept on the turf and her house was the open sky in the forest. She did not eat apples but swart blackberries. Her wine was the dew of the wild white rose, her book a churchyard tomb. Her brothers were the craggy hills, his sisters were the larch trees. So her family consisted of plants and trees with whom she lived happily. (*Stanza I-III*).

She had no breakfast many a morning, and no dinner many a noon. And instead of supper she would sometime stare at the moon with an empty stomach.—(*Stanza IV*). But she prepared garlands every morning and sung songs every night (*Stanza V*). And with her old and brown fingers she plaited mats and gave them to the cottagers she met among the bushes (*Stanza VI*). Old Meg Merrilies was as brave as Queen Margaret and as tall as Amazon. She wore an old red blanket cloak, and a chip hat. She died long ago. May God rest her aged bones somewhere in an unknown grave. (*Stanza VII*).

The poem is remarkable for its music and simplicity of diction. The poet uses alliteration quite frequently.

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25

THE EVE OF St. AGNES

I

ST. AGNES' EVE—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orta'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tear this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his deathbell rung:
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets' gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:

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The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their love receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright ;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white ;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by— she heeded not at all : in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier
And back retir'd : not cool'd by high disdain,
But she saw not : her heart was otherwhere :
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII

She dance'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :
The hallow'd hour was near at hand ; she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers, in anger, or in sport ;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd with feary fancy ; all amort,
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,

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Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the Portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and Worship all unseen ;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

X

He ventures in ; let no buzz'd whisper tell :
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will strom his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel :
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foeman, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage : not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-harded wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland ;
He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro ! hie the from this place :
'They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race !

XII

'Get hence ! get hence ! there's dwarfish Hildebrand ;
'He had a fever late, and in the fit
'He cursed thee and thine, both house and land :
'Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
'More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me ! flit !
'Flit like a ghot away'—'Ah, Gossip dear,
'We're safe enough ; here in this arm chair sit,
'And tell me how'—'Good Saints ! not here, not ;
'Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier'.

XIII

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she mutter'd 'Well—well-a-day !
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
'Now tell me where is Madeline', said he,

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KASHMIR

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'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
'Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
'When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously'.

XIV

'St. Agnes ! Ah ! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
'Yet men will murder upon holy days,
'Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
'And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
'To venture so : it fills me with amaze
'To see thee, Porphyro !—St. Agnes Eve !
'God's help ! my lady fair the conjuror plays
'This very night : good angels her deceive !
'But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time grieve'.

XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid noon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But sood his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose : and he scarce could brook
Tears at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old,

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot : then doth the purpose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start :
'A cruel man and impious thou art :
'Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleey, and dream
'Alone with her good angels, far apart
'From wicked men like thee. Go, go !—I deem
'Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem'.

XVII

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear',
Quoth Porphyro : O may I ne'er find grace
'When my weak voice shall whisper at its last prayer,
'If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
'Or look with ruffian passion in her face ;
'Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;
'Or I will even in a moment's space,
'Awake, with horrid shout my foemen's ears,
'And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears'.

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XVIII

'Ah ! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?
'A poor, weak, palsy-stricken churchyard thing,
'Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll ;
'Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
'Were never miss'd.—Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;
So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX

Which was, to lend him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd faeries pac'd the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt,

XX

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame :
'All cates and dainties shall be stored there
'Quickly on this feast night : by the tambour frame
'Her own lute thou wilt see no time to spare,
'For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
'On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
'Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel in prayer
'The while ; Ah ! thou must needs the lady wed,
'Or may I never leave my grave among the dead',

XXI

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd ;
The dame return'd and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her ; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste,
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII

Her falt' ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit unaware :

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With silver taper's light, and Pious care
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

XXIII

Out went the temper as she hurried in ;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died ;
She clos'd the door, she panted, all skin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide :
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !
But to her heart, her heart was voluable,
Paining with eloquence her balmly side ;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart stifled, in her dell.

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of strains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep—damask'd wings ;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded 'scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens of kings.

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon.
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast.
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint :
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint ;
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from martal taint.

XXVI

Anon his heart revives ; her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;
Loosens her fragrant beddice ; by degrees,
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :
Half hidden, like a mermaid in see-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind or all the charm is fled.

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XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;
Flown like a thought, until the morrow-day ;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As through a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself : then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, slept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo !—how fast she slept.

XXIX

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !
The boisterous, mid-night, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd ;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon ;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez ; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

XXXI

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver : sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,

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Filling the chilly room with perfume light—
'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
'Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
'Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
'Or I shall, drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

XXXII

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous—and; in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, 'La belle dame sans mercy;'
Close to her ear touching the melody:—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone;
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep:
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

XXXV

'Ah, Porphyro!' said, she, 'but even now
'The voice was as sweet tremble in mine ear,
'Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
'And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
'How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
'Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
'Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
'Oh, leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go.

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XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :
'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline !
'Tis dark : the iced gusts still rave and beat :
'No dream, 'alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !
'Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
'Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?
'I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
'Though thou forsakest a deceived thing ;—
'A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing'.

XXXVIII

'My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !
'Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?
'Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed ?
'Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
'After so many hours of toil and quest
'A famish'd pilgrim—sav'd miracle.
'Though I have found, I will not rub thy nest
'Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well
'To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

'Hark ! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
'Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed ;
'Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;
'The bloated wassaillers will never heed :—
'Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;
'There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
'Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :
'Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,
'For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found—

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In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drop'd lamp was flickering by each door ;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and, hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar ;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall ;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide ;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flaggon by his side
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII

And they are gone : aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guest, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy twitch'd with meagre face deform ;
The Beadsman, after thousands eves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

INTRODUCTION TO THE POEM

The poem was written in 1819. It was published posthumously in 1835. Leigh Hunt published the poem in his London Journal. He added a note to it : "St. Agnes was a Roman virgin who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Dioclesian. Her parents, a few days after her decease, are said to have had a vision of her, surrounded by angels, and attended by a white lamb, which afterwards became sacred to her. In the Catholic Church formerly the nuns used to bring a couple of lambs to her alter during Mass. The superstition is (for we believe it is still to be found) that by taking certain measures of divination, damsels may get a sight of their future husbands in dream. The ordinary process seems to have been by fasting..."

The Eve of St. Agnes falls on the 20th January. The theme of the poem is taken from the middle ages. It narrates the simple story of two young lovers who escaped from a hostile atmosphere to seek happiness far away. The story is very similar to that of Romeo and Juliet. The lovers in this poem belong to two families, which were bitterly opposed to each other, yet the hero and the heroine preferred to defy the wishes of those around them.

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In dealing with the theme, Keats has re-captured the atmosphere of the middle age with all its superstitions, grandeur, adventure, chivalry and romance. The poem is in the form of a long narrative in which the poet has packed many beautiful ideas. The poem is based on an old orthodox belief that young virgins, if they observe the days of St. Agnes properly, by fasting and prayer, they would be remembered in their dreams with the vision of their true lovers whom they might marry. This superstitious belief was current in those days and the day was solemnly observed as sacred to the sainthood of St. Agnes. The poem is written in the Spenserian stanza.

SUMMARY OF THE EVE OF St. AGNES

Keats takes the theme of 'The Eve of St. Agnes' from the middle ages. It is the story of two young lovers. The lovers remind the readers of Romeo and Juliet. They run away from the horrific atmosphere that surrounds them. These true lovers of the poem unfortunately belong to two families which were very strong enemies to each other. The bold lovers decided to stand unseparated and to defy the wishes of the people around them. Keats deals with the themes excellently and brings back the whole of the mediaeval atmosphere. The story speaks of the superstition, grandeur, adventure, chivalry and romance. This long narrative poem contains many beautiful ideas and descriptions. The poem is based on an orthodox belief that Virgins by keeping fast on the day of St. Agnes see their lovers in dream whom they might marry. This is the Keynote of this story. It is the belief that the story is surcharged with what Keats's friend Hunt says "St. Agnes was a Roman Virgin who suffered martyrdom in the reign of the Dioclesian. Her parents, a few days after her decease, are said to have had a vision of her, surrounded by angels, and attended by a white lamb, which afterwards became sacred to her. In the catholic church formerly the nuns used to bring a couple of lambs to her during Mass. The superstition is (for we believe it is still to be found) that by taking certain measures of divination, damsels may get the sight of their future husbands in a dream. The ordinary process seems to have been by fasting...In the bitter chill the Beadsman said his prayer. The holy man, with lamp in his hands returned from the prayers in chilly cold. He kept awake the whole night. The heart of a lady brooded on love. She had heard of the miracle, the blessings of St. Agnes perform for uniting two future lovers. The other ladies had told her how by keeping fast on St. Agnes day and by performing due ceremonies—they see their lovers in dream, Madeline loves Porphyro. Finally came, after a long march of men, the brave lover in search of his sweet heart, the fair Madeline. The lady asked the lover to fly away from that place because that was surrounded by his blood thirsty foes. Angela escorted him to a room that was safe from the clutches of the angry men. She told Porphyro that those people would murder him even upon holy days. Angela revealed the purpose of her lady. It brought tears in the eyes of the bold lover. The bold lover after some moments of excitement got an assurance of

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sincerity from Angela. Porphyro took cover in "the maidens' chamber unnoticed by his beloved. He saw fair Madeline celebrate the sacred rites. He observed her when she was sleeping. Madeline's sleep was disturbed—she was back from her thoughts of the dream and the two bold lovers attempted an escape from among the wolves.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Date and Occasion of the Poem

The Eve of St. Agnes was written in January, 1819, and revised in September. Though it assumes the form of a narrative, it is hardly a narrative. Rather it is a monody of dreamy richness, a picturesque presentment of a mood and a sentiment. The poem was written when the possibility of Keats's reunion with Fanny had considerably increased. He had written to her that he loved her deeply. She in return had conveyed to him that she too loved him deeply.

The Theme and Story

The theme of the poem is love. The poem is based on the medieval superstition connected with the Eve of St. Agnes : that a young maiden who has properly fasted and prayed would have visions at mid-night of her absent lover. Accordingly, Madeline keeps the fast, prays and goes to bed. Her lover, Porphyro, prevented from meeting her in daylight by the hostility of their parents, stealthily enters her bedroom and elopes with her.

The Atmosphere

In dealing with the theme, Keats has re-captured the atmosphere of the middle age with all its superstitions, grandeur, adventure, chivalry and romance. The poem is in the form of a long narrative in which the poet has packed many beautiful ideas. The poem deals with the genuine passion of Porphyro and Madeline. They and what belongs them are described in rich natural terms, usually those of crimson and the rose. ("Suddenly a thought came like a full-blown rose"). The stained glass of Madeline's casement is coloured like the wings of the tiger-moth, and its emblazonings blush with the blood of queens and kings.

"The poem deals with a fully consummated passion. The lovers lie at the warm heart of the castle, secluded from the physical and moral coldness outside. We move from the utter chill of the natural world, the hare in the frozen grass to the Beadsman to the chapel, too old and austere for love, then to the revelry in the hall, and finally to the centre to this world of love, Madeline's room, her bed, and Madeline in it. There is then a movement outwards from the warm centre, when the lovers escape into the night."

The Sources

The chief source of the poem is the medieval legend of St. Agnes. The story, derived from a romance of the Italian writer Boccaccio, reminds one of the situation in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

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Its central scene recalls, with a difference, the bedchamber scene in Shakespere's *Cymbeline* which it also, consciously or, unconciously, echoes more than once. St. Agnes was a Roman girl who suffered martyrdom for her Christian faith. She was canonized on the 21st of January 304 A.D. St. Agnes came afterwards to be regarded as the patron saint of virgins. The 21st of January is observed as the St. Agnes day, while the 20th of January is the Eve of St. Agnes. In addition to the folk-tale Keats seems to have got ideas from Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Ben Jonson's *Satyr*. The idea of the feast in the poem seems to have been derived *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* and the Gothic castle from Mrs. Anne Radcliff's romances.

"One only guesses his adventure with Fanny Brawne. But there is a knowledge of actual circumstances from which he was not disentangled. The frozen fields and the Christmas festivity at Hampstead, his medieval surroundings at Chichester, the remote quiet of Bedhampton. And yet these outward circumstances of warmth and cold, youth and age, sound and silence, all counterpointed against each other. These outward circumstances project the emotion he felt at the unexpected birth of a new love in his time of sorrow of Tom's death."

Contrast and Parallel

Contrast and parallel are the foundations of this poem. Light is contrasted with shade, coldness with warmth. The contrasts between the stillness of Madeline's room, "silken hushed, and chaste" and the noisy celebrations in the hall below, between the warmth of her bed and the chilly night, between the fever heat of midsummer vermona and aching cold of Keats's castle are striking. In brief, the poem offers a brilliant contrast between warmth and cold, youth and age, sound and silence.

Fusion of the Pagan and Christian Elements

In stanza 25, Porphyro sees all the Christian associations of the word angel "she seemed splendid angel, newly drest." In stanza 31, Porphyro addresses the sleeping Madeline as "My seraph fair". In stanza 14, the "good angels" are invoked to "deceive" Madeline with dreams of her lover. The old Angela, urging Porphyro to leave again refers to the "good angels." The name of the old woman is Angela. All these things indicate the Christian element in the poem. In the poem, there is a reference to Virgin Mary. The Beadsman represents orthodox Christianity at its most austere. If St. Agnes Eve is an occasion for hope in the case of Madeline, it is an occasion for "harsh penance" for the Beadsman.

All these references to angels are connected with one very important element in the poem, and that is its mingling of the Christian with the secular and even with the pagan. The very superstition that sends Madeline early to bed is a piece of thoroughly pagan folk-belief

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and as such most oddly associated with the Christian Saint Agnes. In stanza 7, we hear of Madeline's maiden eyes divine ; and stanza 9 tells us how Porphyro longs to gaze and worship all unseen, perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss. We notice how the idea of worship soon gives way to physical contact. It is no accident that this is so, for Porphyro stands very much for the human and unsanctified.

This poem is not to be regarded as an attack on Christianity or as a dismissal of paganism. Both Christianity in its pure form, and Christianity in its adulterated, "paganised" form, are part of the world on which the lovers turn their backs. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that Keats is merely dismissing the belief that he does not share. For altough Angela and the Beadsman may die, and Madeline may be roused to a new world of reality, the storm into which the lovers fly is full of dangerous possibilities. It is not a flight into a glamorous land, but a step into the coldly real world. Keats does not offer the lovers' flight as a triumphant escape from a world of superstition, both institutional and pagan, into an illuminated landscape in which everything is for the best. What Keats is doing is to explore in a more subtle manner the tension between the spiritual and the physical, and the ambiguous nature of love—(*Robin Mayhead*).

Symbolism

According to *Jack Stillinger*, a small group of critics has tried to find a deeper significance in the poem. The poem seems to dramatise certain ideas that Keats held dear to his heart before writing at about the nature of imagination, the relationship between this world and the next and the progress of an individual's ascent towards spiritualization.

Another interpretation, says *Jack Stillinger*, is that the castle of Madeline's father allegorically represents human life, and that Porphyro, passing upward to a closet adjoining Madeline's bed chamber and from there into the chamber itself, progresses from apartment to apartment in the mansion of life, executing a spiritual ascent to heaven's boundary. Porphyro's saying to the sleeping Madeline : "Thou art my heaven, and I think eremite" confirms this idea. *Jack Stillinger*, does not agree with this point. He depicts Porphyro as villainous seducer. He also points out that no matter how much Keats entered into the feelings of his characters, he could not lose touch with the claims and responsibilities of the world he lived in.

The Narration of the Poem

To quote *Roger Sharrock*, "In the flow and throb of its emotion, the narrative of this poem is wrought up to the pitch of lyric intensity, though the method is richly descriptive. Everything in the poem contributes to the isolation of the central figures, splendid in their romantic passion against the dark background of the hatred or their elders, cold hearts in a cold season. Though the poem is loaded with descriptive detail, none of the pictorial passages is merely decorative.

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Other Beauties of the Poem

The poem is remarkable for its gorgeous decoration. The lavishness of decoration reminds us of Spenser. The poem was written under the influence of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The poem is in the Spenserian stanza, and the skilful handling of the Spenserian stanza heightenes its sleepy atmosphere and imparts to it a rare melody. Its peculiar power lies "in the delicate transfusion of sight and emotion into sound ; in making pictures out of words, or turning words into pictures ; of giving a visionary beauty to the close items of description, of holding all the materials of the poem in a long-drawn out suspense of music and reveries." (*Rossetti*)

The poem certainly throbs with lyrical intensity and quite possibly it results from the poet's happy mood to have Fanny's love. But nowhere do we find the 'I' of the poet intruding upon the characters. It is the atmosphere, the sensitive language and the sensuous imagery that explain everything.

Conclusion

However, this matchless poem, full of life and movement, rich in colour and sensuous word-pictures, has its own blemishes. For example, the Beadsman and Chapel, though they introduce the tale and provide contrast, have nothing to do with the main action ; they are superfluous. Similarly, the banquet which is arranged in Madeline's chamber has no purpose and no justification, though it may tempt the palate of the readers by its richness and flavour. The incident is so trivial and it has been made so much of for the sake of verbal embellishment that one is forced to conclude that Keats's capacity for sustained narrative was of a most feeble kind. "The Eve of St. Agnes" is a poem of "glamour par excellence."

THE MEDIEVAL ELEMENT

The Middle Ages supplied proper and immense material to English poets. They drew freely upon this store house of inspiration. Keats was greatly pleased with mediaevalism. He found proper food in mediaeval life and legends. His poem *The Eve of St. Agnes* is a fine example of his taste in mediaevalism.

Pomp and Pageantry

The Middle Ages were famous for their artistic tastes. The barons led a gorgeous splendid life. They were given to feasting, dancing and all other merry making. Madeline's father in the poem also celebrated the Eve of St. Agnes with great pomp and show. The houses of these barons were grand :

> A casement high and triple—arch'd there was,
> All garlanded with carven imag'ries,
> Of fruits, and flowers and bunches of knot grass.
> And diamonded with panes of quaint device.
> Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes.
> As are the tiger-month's deep damask'd wings.

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Personal Revalries and Hostilities

In the Middle Ages, there were frequent wars between the feudal lords. They were at daggers drawn with each other. They had personal rivalries and they were therefore hostile to each other. In the poem 'The Eve of St. Agnes' we have a glimpse of this hostility. The father of Madeline was hostile to the family of Porphyro Thus Madeline could not love Porphyro and vice versa. When Porphyro reaches the castle of Madeline he is to go quite stealthily. The slightest noise might end his life :

> For him those chambers held barbarian hordes,
> Hyena foemen and hot blooded lords,
> Whose very dogs would execrations how ?
> Against his lineage...

The Theme based on the Medieval Legend

The theme of the poem is based on the medieval legend of St. Agnes. The legend was that of a maid observed certain ceremonies and went to bed supperless on the Eve of St. Agnes. She was sure to get a vision of her lover that night. This blind faith has been portrayed in the following lines :

> They told her how upon St. Agnes Eve,
> Young virgins might have visions of delight,
> And soft adoring from their loves receive,
> Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
> If ceremonies due they did a right.

The ceremonies have been described below :—

> As supperless to bed they must return,
> And couch supine their beauties, lily white,
> Nor look behind, nor side ways, but require,
> Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Chivalry and Adventure

Another aspect of medieval life was its chivalric spirit. There were adventurous persons who risked their lives to achieve their desired ends. They were really brave persons. We admire the adventurous spirit of Porphyro. He is going to meet Madeline in a castle which is well guarded. This type of adventure cannot be undertaken by timid persons. He not only went to the castle of Madeline but also to her private room. He had the courage to elope with her from that castle :

> She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
> For there were sleeping dragons all around.
> At glaring watch perhaps with ready appears
> They ran away successful,
> And they are gone, aye, ages long ago
> These lovers fled away into the storm.

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Element of Love and Romance

Love was the main force in the medieval ages. Without it no poem could be composed. A lover must make all possible efforts to gain the hands of his beloved, this was the spark in medieval poetry. In the *Eve of St. Agnes* love is the enkindling fire. Porphyro takes all possible and impossible risks to meet his beloved. He entreats Angela to provide him the vision of his beloved. He assures her that he would not harm her :

I will not harm her by all point I swear,
.....
If one of her soft ringlets I displace.
Or look with ruffain passion in her face,
Good Angels, believe me by these tears.

Madeline is equally sincere and sacrificing in her love for Porphyro :

Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings :
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go,

Conclusion

Besides the above mentioned factors the setting of the poem is also medieval. All the accesories are medieval—the adventurours knight, the beautiful love-lorn lady, the medieval legend of St. Agnes, the medieval castle, and the element of romance and chivalry. "But it is medievalism seen through the magical mist of the imagination of Keats." The poet's romantic imagination found its best expression in the medieval world.

NOTES, MEANINGS AND EXPLANATIONS

Stanza 1.

Chill : Cold ; **limped** : went with difficulty, trembling with cold ; **Numb** : Frozen ; **Beadsman.....told his rosary's** : counted the beads of his string ; **pious incense** : incense burnt by pious people ; **Censer** : a vessel ; **Virgin's picture** : the picture of Virgin Mary.

Stanza 2.

Meagre : lean. **Barefoot** : without having any shoe.

Wan : sickly.

Chapel : a small church attached to the great castle of a knight or a lord, where the members of his family prayed.

Aisle : On the wings of the chapel separated from the central part by pillars.

The sculptur'd dead : The statutes of the dead people.

Emprison'd : Enclosed.

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Black purgatorial rails : The statutes are enclosed by black iron bars. Even these iron bars were very cold and caused torment to the dead as in Purgatory.

Purgatory : A place where the spirits of the dead are purged of their sins.

Orat'ries : places of private worship. **Dumb :** silent. **Ache :** feel pain. **Hoods and nails :** dresses worn by Knights.

Stanza 3.

Flatter'd : Softened.

For his soul's reprive : For the pardon of his soul.

Stanza 4.

Snarling trumpets : The notes of the trumpets are compared to the snarl of the animals.

The carved angles-cross-wise on their breasts : The marble figures of bright-eyed angels (who were shown with hair thrown back and wings folded on them in the manner of a cross) seemed to be gazing on this scene of revelry.

Stanza 5.

Argent reverly : "Made of silver", of The splendid revellers or feasters."

And turn sole—thoughted : And turn our thoughts entirely to winged St. 'Agnes' care, the loving care given to her devotees by the winged saint, Agnes, presumably, as an angel. Agnes, would be supposed to wear wings.

Stanza 6.

Couch supine : Lie in bed, face upwards.

Stanza 7.

Yearning like a god in pain : The word 'yearning' expresses 'the pathetic beauty of the music.'

Came many a tiptoe amorous cablier : Many a gallant knight, in love with Madeline, came softly-treading to attract her attention.

Stanza 8.

Regardless : Not seeing.

Timbrels : Musical instruments like tambourines.

She was hoodwink'ds : She was indifferent to everything except to the supernatural ideas in her mind.

Amort : Deadened or dull.

Lamb unshorn : Two lambs were brought upon St. Agnes' Eve to Mass and offered whilst the Agnes was chanted. The wool was then spun, dressed and woven into cloth by nuns.

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Stanza 9.

Buttressed : Moonlight : Concealed behind the buttress from the moonlight. A buttress is a stone support built against a wall.

Stanza 10.

Hyena foemen : Foes as cruel and as savage as hyena.

Beldame : An aged woman, a hag.

Stanza 11.

Chorus bland : The pleasant sound of music.

Palsied : Weak and trembling.

Stanza 12.

Gossip : Used here in the older sense of 'familiar friend' and not of a teller of idle tales, its modern meaning.

Stanza 13.

Lattice : A window with criss-cross arrangement of panes.

The holy loom : The legend of St. Agnes has it that she is the patroness of lambs, and that their wool is woven into cloth on a sacred loom by dedicated nuns.

Stanza 14.

Thou must hold water, etc. : A sieve is a strainer, through which liquids can be strained. Yet which is able to go sailing in a sieve, and the water does not come through. Porphyro would require to have similar magic power.

Stanza 15.

Brook : Here it means 'prevent' or 'control' and not the usual sense of 'endure'. ("Keats has coined several words, and somewhat stretched the meaning of others, but I can remember no other example of an actual mistake in his use of a common archaism."—(*Salincourt.*)

Stanza 16.

Purple riot : Reference to the agitation of the heart and the swift coursing of the blood.

Stanza 17.

O may I never find grace : I may never have soul's salvation (if I do any mischief or harm of Madeline).

Stanza 18.

Passing bell : The church bell that was rung when a person. died.

Beard them : Seize them by the beard, that is, challenge them or defy them.

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Stanza 19.

While legion'd sleepy-eyed : While legions of fairies walked over the sheet covering her, and the pale forces of magic held her in slumber.

Merlin : Mentioned in the Arthurian legends. Merlin was a wayward born of demon and a woman. He 'paid his monstrous debt,' that is, yielded up his life to the demon from whom he derived his magic, when Viviane caused his disappearance or death by the working of one of his own magic spells. "The simile was obviously suggested to his (Keat's) mind by the storm which he conceives as bursting out upon the meeting of Porphyro and Madeline, as before on the meeting of Merlin and Viviane."—(*Salincourt*).

Stanza 20.

Cakes : sweets.

Tambour frame : A frame shaped like a drum on which material is stretched for embroidery.

Or may I never die : May I never rise from my grave on the Day of Judgment or Resurrection, may my soul never go to heaven.

Stanza 21.

Amain : Greatly.

Stanza 22.

Mission'd spirit : A spirit with a mission.

Ring-dove : A wood-pigeon, called 'ring-dove' because of a circular making on the head.

Fray'd : Frightened (suggested by a passage in Spenser). "The idea implied is that Madeline fled to her chamber as speedily as a terrified wood-pigeon flies to its nest."—(*Boardman*).

Stanza 23.

Its little smoke.....dies : A picture of delicate and vivid imagination. Keats often saw things with the eye of a painter.

But to her heart was voluble : Madeline did not speak a word, for she had to remain silent. But in her heart were eloquent words unspoken.

Paining with eloquence her balmy side : Her heart was, as it were, bursting to speak. In this way, it caused pain.

Stanza 24.

A casement high : The four stanzas beginning with this line have been selected for special praise by such critics as Leigh Hunt.

Hazlitt and Lamb say that Keats's description is almost Chaucer-like painting in its delicacy, and recalls the 'Christabel' of Coleridge.

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As are the Tiger-moth'd deep—damask'd wing : Like the gorgeous-coloured wings of the tiger-moth (an insect so called because the colour of its wings is like that of a tiger's skin).

Shielded' scutcheon : As a scutcheon is a shield itself; it is unnecessary to say 'shielded' scutcheon. It means here a painted coat of arms upon a shield.

Stanza 25.

Rose-bloom fell on her hand : The moon-light, shining through the coloured glass, made her hands the colour of roses in bloom.

Soft amethyst : A pale violet colour.

To free from mortal taint : According to Christian theology, all human beings are saints or sinners because of the sin of Adam and Eve. But Madeline seemed wholly pure, an exception to the general rule.

Stanza 26.

Unclasps her warm'd jewels one by one : Takes off all jewels which had been warmed by contact with her body. "When Madeline unclasps her jewels, a weaker poet would have dwelt on their lustre or other visible qualities. Keats puts these aside and speaks straight to our spirits in an epithet breathing with the very life of the wearer—her warmed jewels."—(*Colvin*).

Dares not look behind : It was a part of the rites that one must not look behind, otherwise St. Agnes would not respond.

Poppied : This is a strange adjective and difficult to explain, it must be felf. Poppy seeds yield opium, which induces sleep. She slept heavily as if under the influence of the poppy drug.

Stanza 27.

Clasp'd like a missal.....Paynims pray : Missal is a Roman Catholic prayer-book, and Paynims means pagans. The meaning is : Madeline was held as fast in sleep, as a prayer-book is firmly clasped and cherished by Christians in a land of pagans.

Swart : Dark, black.

Stanza 28.

And listen'd has breathing.....tenderness : The sound of a sleeping person gently breathing is here skilfully imitated.

Stanza 29.

Morphean : That which induces sleep.

The hall-door shuts again : Mark the contrast between the revelers and their din, and the subdued movements of Porphyro.

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Stanza 30.

While he from forth the closet brought a heap : *Cf.* Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Book I.

Stanza 31.

Wreathed silver : Could it be silver, with wreathes of flowers engraved on it ?

Eremite : Hermit, a devotee who retires to worship all alone.

Stanza 32.

Broad golden fringe.....lies : An edging or margin of golden light was thrown upon the carpet by the moon.

Entoil'd in woofed phantasies : Absorbed in fancies woven together like a net.

Stanza 33.

Provence : A province in suth-east of France.

La Dame Sans Mercie : The lady without pity, a poem written in French by Alain Chartier (1386-1458). See Keats's poem of the same name.

Stanza 34.

Her eyes were open.....sleep : Madeline was awake, but she still thought that the Porphyro she was seeing was a vision.

Stanza 35.

For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go ; This utterance shows Madeline's 'pure simplicity.'

Stanza 36.

Into her dream he melted : Porphyro embraces Madeline ekactly as Madeline's has been dreaming it would be.

Solution sweet : Porphyro and Madeline enjoyed the supreme felicity of physical love.

Love's alarm : To give warning to be quickly away.

Stanza 37.

Flaw-blown : Blow by a gust of wind.

Unpruned : Untrimmed.

Stanza 38.

Heart-shap'd and Vermeil-dy'd : Heart-shaped because his heart is hers, and flushed with love.

Ah, silver shrine : Porphyro tells Madeline that she is the sole object of his devotion, that he has reached his destination with great difficulty and wandering and that if she trusts him he will be entirely loyal to her, and have no other purpose in life than to serve her,

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Here will I take my rest : This is reminiscent of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Stanza 39.

An elfin storm : A storm stirred up by the elfines, little fairylike creatures.

Haggard seeming : Gaunt, dreadful in appearance.

Boon : Because under its cover they can escape.

Boated..... : Drunkards of revellers, swollen with drink.

Rhenish : Rhine wine.

Mead : An alcoholic drink made in the Saxon kingdom by the tormentation of honey.

For o'er the southern moors : Keats had written 'over the Dartmoor bleak' here, a reading full of interest as hinting to us at the locality he had in mind.

Stanza 40.

Darkling in the dark : (*Cf.* Ode to a Nightingale.....Darkling I listen.')

Arras : Tapestry. It was so called after the town of the same name (Arras) where it was first made. In earlier days the walls of great houses were covered by a cloth with pictures on it.

The besieging wind : The wind that was besieging the house like a foe.

The long carpets rose along the gusty floor : a reference to carpets.

Stanza 41.

Iron : Used for the porch because its gate was iron-bound.

But his sagacious eye an inmate owns : The dog recognises in Madeline a member of the household and so does not bark.

Stanza 42.

"This stanza summarises the conclusion in a series of striking contrasts—the wakeful lovers are contrasted with the fierce, sleeping warriors, tormented by nightmare the happy Madeline with the joyless, withered Angela the youthful Porphyro with the aged Beadsman." —(*Boardman*).

IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

(1) At length.....old romance. (*Stanza 5*)

It was the 20th January. All merry-makings were going on. The rooms had smooth floors and rich furniture. All preparations were complete in connection with the celebration of the pious night.

At last the merry-makers in bright dresses appeared on the scene. The males put on feathers in their head-dresses and the ladies had jewelled crowns in their head-dresses. The entire equipage was

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ornamental and shining. There was no lack of brightness in the bearings. The number of the revellers was large. They took hold of the mind like the forms of fairies. These well dressed men and women in the hall reminded people of old Knights and ladies in the old books of romance. These Knights had great attraction for the young minds on account of their beautiful pagentries and heroic deeds in the battle field.

(2) She dane'd.....morn. (*Stanza 6*)

Various Knights in their best dresses appeared before Madeline but she did not see them. She was lost in thoughts. She was dreaming of meeting her husband that night.

Her eyes were vacant. They did not indicate any special thing. They were fixed on Porphyro. Her lips were anxious to be kissed by him. She was breathing quickly out of curiosity. She was quite particular about that sacred hour when she would meet her lover. Drums were being beaten to celebrate the night. A large crowd of guests was passing that way. But she was sad as the lover was still away from her. She did not pay any attention to the quests, some of whom were angry owing to her neglectful attitude. Others took it lightly. She had feelings of love, opposition, hatred and contempt. She was blinded with the thought of fairy magic. Therefore, she was inattentive to all. She was concentrating on St. Agnes. She was thinking of offering two unshaven lambs to St. Agnes.

(3) Sudden a thought.....seem. (*Stanza 7*)

Porphyro was happy when Angela told him about her lady's resolve to meet her lover on the St. Agnes Eve. She was lost in performing those magical rites. She was found sleeping even.

This sleepy position of Madeline enabled Porphyro to devise a plan to win her over. At once a new idea brightened his face. It was as clear to him as is the rose when it blossoms fully. His heart which was so far sad on account of the thoughts of meeting his beloved was violently excited. He decided to play a trick. When he conveyed it to Angela she began to startle at his new plan. She at once called him merciless and unholy. He only wanted Angela not to inform the lady about his arrival. He would go to her room like a theif and meet her. She would be allowed to pray and dream she liked. He would not disturb even her sleep. The old nurse did not like his idea. She wanted to save her from bad persons liked him. She asked him to go away. Really, he was quite different from what he appeared to be. Apparently, he was innocent and simple but really he was cunning and mischicvous.

(4) Which was.....debt. (*Stanza 19*)

Angela was moved by the speech of Porphyro. She was ready to help him whatever might happen to her.

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She went ahead in her plans to assist him. She took him near to the private room of Madeline with top secrecy. Then he was closed in a room from where he might look at his beloved. He could see her but she could not detect it. This process might enable him to win a matchless wife on the night of St. Agnes. Madeline was hunted by innumerable fairies in her dreams. Her bed-cover was being assiled by these fairies. Similarly the enchantment of St. Agnes Eve in that dim moonlight owerpowered her and she remained sleepy and drowsy, although her love was so very near to her. It was only a rare meeting of the beloved and the lover on such a stormy night exposed to all dangers. The lovers have never met earlier. The first meeting was between Merlin and his beloved Vivian. When the beloved imprisoned him in a tree. He had to fall a prey to his own spell. In that manner, she paid back what he received from his father, a demon.

(5) Out went.....dell. (*Stanza 23*)

Madeline came out of another part of the building. When she was going to her chamber, she saw the old nurse called Angela trying to seek the stair-case in dark. The young girl atonce guided her with the light of the silver taper and then she came back to her chamber.

In this hury, Madeline lost the balance of her hand and the candle was put off. It then produced smoke but soon it died away in the pale moonlight. Madeline closed the door and then she breathed heavily. She in that position looked like an angel. She was endowed with the power of all sweeping vision. There was the need of absolute silence. Even the slightest sound could create a great danger. External silence could be maintained but it was very difficult for Madeline to keep her heart silent. It wanted to express 'itself'. It was in a state of violent agitation. It wanted to burst forth and pour out all its feelings as strongly as it could. If she did not express the feelings of her heart, there was the possibility of the choking of her heart. She could be compared to that speechless nightingale which puffed its throat to sing but which could not sing owing to its dumbness. In that case, it was sure to be chocked. It would then die one day in its valley. Similarly Madeline pined for expression.

(6) Anon his heart.....fled. (*Stanza 26*)

When Porphyro saw Madeline in her purest form, he fainted away. She was so pure and taintless.

Very soon he came to his senses and then he began to watch her activities more closely. She had finished her evening prayers. Her hair formerly was decorated with pearls but now she removed them from that place. Her hair thus was pearless. She then removed her jewels one by one. These jewels were warm on account of their touch with her body. She also loosened the bodice full of sweet smell. She then looked to her rich clothes. They, too were made a bit loose, with the result that they began to touch her knees. Whenever she moved,

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these loose clothes produced a slight sound. With the loosening of her dress, she was half revealed and half concealed. She was still lost in deep thoughts. She was awake physically but she was mentally sleeping over the bed of fancies. She was a dream in which St. Agnes had come to her bed. She could not decide to look at her because if she saw behind the charm of the magic would be gone and she would not have the vision of her future husband.

(7) **Soon.....bud again.** (*Stanza 27*)

Madeline kept on dreaming Agnes. She did not look behind otherwise the charm would have been over. She was shivering with cold in her cold room. Although she was awake, she was unite unconscious for her surroundings as she was lost in fancies. At last she was overpowered by the drowsiness of sleep. Her body felt a soothing sleep. The soul was tired and it left the body. It flew away during her sleep. It disappeared as an idea vanishes. She was happily sheltered both from joy and pain. When we are awake we feel joy and sorrow. These two feelings are absent for a sleeper. The sleep embraced Madeline so warmly as a Christian grips tightly a prayer-book when dark-complexioned heathens offer prayers. The maiden was protected from sun and rains as she slept in a covered room her beautiful face which bloomed like a rose when she was awake looked like a bud in her sleep. Nobody could have imagined that the rose could be converted into a bud.

Note : (1) As though.....again—We have read that a bud is changed into a rose but here the poet imagines that the rosy face of Madeline was converted into a bud in her sleep.

(2) This stanza is regarded as the best one by critics. Images pile on images. The mind of the reader fluctuates and moves with one image or the other. At last the best image comes in the last line.

(8) **These delicates.....ache.** (*Stanza 28*)

Porphyro took advantage of Madeline's sleep. He arranged various fruits for the feast during her sleep. Things from Samarcand to Lebanon were there on the table.

Porphyro collected all these fruits on the table with his own hands which shone brightly on the beautiful dishes. He put them in baskets which were made of silver threads skilfully interwoven. This mixture of white and gold colours must have presented a lovely sight. The fruits were all lying on the table in the peaceful atmosphere of the night. They filled the cold room with the sweet fragrance. The whole room was scented with their perfume. Then the hero asked his bright angel to wake up and oblige him with her conversation. She was a deity to him and he was her worshipper. She was asked to wake up at least for the sake of St. Agnes whose celebrations were being held that night. If she slept while her lover stood before her, it would be a great dishonour to St. Agnes who wanted the union of

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lover and the beloved that night. His heart was agonised with love and so if she continued sleeping, he would also sleep by her side and get mental peace.

(9) Awaking up.....stone. (*Stanza 29*)

Porphyro was lost in thoughts when Madeline did not wake up. She was overpowered by the charm, and it appeared that her eyes could never shake off the effect of that spell.

Very soon Porphyro's fancies were gone. He got up and was free from dreams. He devised a nice plan for awakening the beloved. He touched her lute which was lying idle. He sounded it loudly but the tunes that it produced were soft. He sang an old song which could not be heard for many days. In the south east part of France people called it a song in honour of a fair lady without mercy. He played upon the lute just near the ears of Madeline so that she might be awakened quickly. The beloved was disturbed by the song. When she heard it so near to her she made a soft mourning utterance. She began to heave a heavy and quick sigh. Very soon she opened her blue eyes which also indicated fear. They remained open due to fear. At this, Porphyro knelt down before Madeline to pay homage to her. He did not speak a single word, but he remained pale like a calm state. How could he say anything? He had already disturbed a cultured lady in her sweet and secluded sleep.

(10) Beyond.....set. (*Stanza 30*)

The words of Madeline addressed to Porphyro of her dream filled Porphyro with new zeal and life. His dullness was gone and he was once again a divine being on account of his bright and red face.

Madeline's words of deep and passionate love moved Porphyro to new excitements and vigour. He experienced a passion which is rarely felt by a human being. He at once gave up kneeling and stood before his beloved. His personality at his movement sparkled most. He was lifted into heaven by the ecstasy of love. His face shone with a reddish colour. He was like a twinkling star in the calm, blue. sky. He rose his personality to such a stature that the Porphyro of her dream was no other than the red Porphyro standing before her. The distinction between two Porphyros was gone. The rose merged its fragrance into that of the violet. Oneness was established. This union of the two personalities was a happy one. While the two lovers were meeting inside the room, the hail was falling over the window-panes outside. It was an indication that time was fleeting. Many changes were taking place in external nature. Even the moon had set. There were warnings to the lover and the beloved that they should quicken their activities otherwise their end was imminent.

(11) Hark.....for thee. (*Stanza 32*)

Porphyro was happy in the company of Madeline. He advised her to run away with him as he was her trusted benefactor.

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The hero drew her attention towards the blowing of the storm. It was coming from the land of fairies. It appeared to be ugly externally but it was a blessing in disguise. They would get the best opportunity to run away in this disturbed weather. The morning was also to dawn soon. Hence they could escape easily. The Knights were all heavily drunk and as such they would not be able to detect their escape. They should go at once with a good speed. Nobody could listen to their conversation, nobody could see them. They were down with wine. They had taken honey and water which induced them to sleep. She should therefore take the advantage of this position. She should get up and be ready to run away with him. He had already arranged accomodation for her in the marshy place to the south.

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26
LAMIA

PART I

Upon a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods,
Before king Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft :
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt :
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.
Fast be the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse.
Though Fancy' casket were unlock'd to choose,
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet !
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare
From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret bed :
In vain ; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonel ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity : thus the lone voice spake :
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake !

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When move in a sweet body fit for life,
'And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
'Of hearts and lips ! Ah, miserable me !'
The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So raindow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self,
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar :
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete.
And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his pery.

'Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light
'I had a splendid dream of thee last night :
'I saw thee sitting on a throne of gold,
'Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
'The only sad one ; for thou didst not hear
'The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear,
'Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
'Deaf to his throbbing throat's long long melodious moan.
'I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
'Break, amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phoebean dart,
'Strike for the Cretan isle ; and here thou art !
'Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid ?'
Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired :
'Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired !
'Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
'Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
'Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—

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'Where she doth breathe !' 'Bright planet, thou hast said,'
Return'd the snake, 'but seal with oaths, fair God !'
'I swear,' said Hermes, 'by my serpent rod,
'And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown !'
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliance feminine :
'Too frail of heart ! for this lost nymph of thine,
'Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
'About these thornless wilds ; her pleasant days
'She tastes unseen ; unseen her nimble feet
'Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet ;
'From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
'She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen ;
'And by my power is her beauty veil'd
'To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd
'By the love-glance of unlovely eyes,
'Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.
'Pale grew her immortality, for woe
'Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her steep
'Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
'Her loveliness invisible, yet free
'To wander as she loves, in liberty.
'Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
'If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon !'
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
'I was a woman, let me have once more
'A woman's shape, and charming as before.
'I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss !
'Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
'Stoop, Hermes let me breath upon thy brow,
'And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.'
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream ; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flush'd moment, hovering it might seem
Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd
Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd
To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm
So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,

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And towards her stept : she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cower'd nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour ;
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees,
Into the green-recessed woods they flew ;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change ; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent ;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lip-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks' without one cooling tear.
The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain ;
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace ;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede ;
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars :
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent : of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown ; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly ;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, 'Lycius ! gentle Lycius !'—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
These words dissolv'd : Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite ?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore ;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peraean rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back,
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned,
To see herself, escap'd from so sore ills,

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While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.
Ah, happy Lycius !—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd or blush'd, or on spring flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy :
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core ;
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain ;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange ;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art :
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.
Why this fair creature choose so faerily
By the wayside to linger, we shall see ;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent :
How-ever where she will'd, her spirit went ;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair ;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine ;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend ;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore ; for freshly blow
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd ; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire ;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk.
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk :

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Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades,
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green ;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood : he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabling thus, 'Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone ?
'Lycius, look back ! and be some pity shown.'
He did ; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice ;
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long ;
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore ;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure :
'Leave thee alone ! Look back ! Ah, Goddess, see
'Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee !
'For pity do not this sad heart belie—
'Even as thou vanishest so shall I die.
'Stay ! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay !
'To thy fat wishes will thy streams obey :
'Stay ! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
'Alone they can drink up the morning rain :
'Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
'Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
'Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine ?
'So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
'Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
'Thy memory will waste me to a shade :—
'For pity do not melt !'—If I should stay,'
Said Lamia, 'here, upon this floor of clay,
'And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
'What canst thou say or do of charm enough
'To dull the nice remembrance of my home ?
'Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
'Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
'Empty of immortality and bliss !
'Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
'That finer spirits cannot breathe below
'In human climes, and live : Alas ! poor youth,

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'What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
'My essence ? What serener palaces,
'Where I may all my many senses please,
'And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirts aypease ?
'It cannot be—Adieu !' So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh :
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthy lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires.
And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks ; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wonder's how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir'd and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love ; yet in content
Till she saw, him as once she pass'd him by,
Where 'gainst a column he lent thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore ?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays :
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well ;
And every word she spake entic'd him on
To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,

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Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh ;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces ; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized.
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.
As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewed,
Mutter'd like tempest in the distance brew'd
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers,
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white
Companion'd or alone ; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the cornied shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonade.
Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
Slow-steep'd, and robed in philosophic grown ;
Lyciu' shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled : 'Ah,' said he,
'Why do you shudder love, so ruefully ?
'Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew ?'—
'I'm wearied,' said fair Lamia ; 'tell me who
'Is that old man ? I cannot bring to mind
'His features :—Lycius ! wherefore did you blind
'Yourself from his quick eyes ?' Lycius replied,
'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
'And good instructor ; but tonight he seems
'The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams'
While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,

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Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed step below,
Mild as a star in water ; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble's hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine.
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds A Eolian
Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclose'd a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,
And a few Persian mustes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets : none knew where
They could inhabit ; the most curious
Where foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house :
And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

PART II

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, foregive us !—cinders, ashes, dust ;
Love in palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast :—
That is doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clench'd it quite : but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.
Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous growth of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roas,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin : side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts :—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tythe which love, still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost slept ;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought a-buzzing in his head,

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For the first time, since first he harbour'd in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys ; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
'Who do you sigh, fair creature ?' whisper'd he :
'Why do you think ?' reurn'd she tenderly :
'You have deserted me :—where am I now ?
'Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow :
'No, no, you have dismiss'd me ; and I go
'From your breast houseless : aye, it must be so',
He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,
'My silver planet, both of eve and morn !
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
'While I am striving dow to fill my heart
'With deeper crimson, and a double smart ?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
'Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
'Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose ?
'Aye, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
'My thoughts ! shall I unveil them ? Listen then !
'What mortal hath a prize, that other men
'May be confounded and abash,d withal,
'But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
'And trumph, as in thee I should rejoice
'Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
'Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the thronged streets your bridal car
'wheels round its dazzling spokes'.—The lady's cheek,
'Trembled : she nothing said, but, pale and meek.
Arose and knelt before him. wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words ; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung.
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim :
Besides, for all his love, in self, despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.

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Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent ! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she lor'd the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
'Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
'I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
'Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
'As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
'Fit appellation for this dazzling frame ?
'Or friends or kinsfolk on the cited earth,
'To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth ?,
'I have no friends', said Lamia, 'no not one' ;
'My presence in wide Corinth hardly known :
'My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
'Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
'Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
'And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
'Even as you list invite your many guests ;
'But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
'With any pleasure on me, do not bid
'Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.'
Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry ; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep ; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.
It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day.
Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants : but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,

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High in the midst in honour of the bride ;
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch'd one to one
All down the aisled place ; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied, lay an untad feast
Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper panels ; then anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appear'd and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius ! Madman ! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers ?
The herd approach'd each guest, with busy brain,
Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain
And enter'd marveling : for they knew the street,
Remember'd it from childhood all complete
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne ;
So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen :
Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere ;
'Twas Apollonius : something too he laugh'd,
As though some knotty problem, that had draft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw.
And solve and melt :—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. "Tis no common rule,
Lycius,' said he, 'for uninvited guest
'To force himself upon you, and infest
'With an unbidden presence the bright throng
'Of younger friends ; yet must I do this wrong,
'And you forgive me.' Lycius blush'd and led
The old man through the inner doors broad-spread ;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

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Of wealthy luster was the banquet-room,
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume ;
Before each lucid panel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide swev'd upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets : fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd,
Of cups and groblets, and the store thrice told
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of Ceres' horn and, in huge vessels, wine.
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine,
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antichamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd.
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wandering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring.

Soft went the music the soft are along,
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong
Kept up among the guests, discuring low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow ;
But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments :—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies
The roof awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange ; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Flysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height ;
Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright :
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought
High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

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What wreath for Lamia ? What for Lycius ?
What for the sage, old Apollonius ?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue ;
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim
Into forgetfulness ; and, for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the more touch of cold philosophy ?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven :
We know her woof, her texture ; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things,
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir,
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
Lycius then press'd her hand with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch :
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins ;
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
'Lamia, what means this ? Wherefore dost thou start ?
'Know'st thou that man ?' Poor Lamia answer'd not.
He gaz'd into her eyes, and a jot
Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal :
More, more he gaz'd : his human senses reel :
Some hungry spell that lovliness absorbs ;
There was no recognition in those orbs.
'Lamia !' he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush ; the stately music no more breathes ;
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased :
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.

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'Lamia !' he shriek'd ; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
'Begone, foul dream !' he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wander'd on fair-spaced temples ; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek ; no passion to illume
The deep-recessed vision :—all was blight ;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
'Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man !
'Turn them aside' wretch ! or the righteous ban
'Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
'Here represent their shadowy presences,
'May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
'Of painful blindness ; leaving the forlorn,
'In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
'Of conscience, for their long offended might,
'For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
'Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
'Corinthians ! look upon that grey-beared wretch !
'Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch
'Around his demon eyes ! Corinthians, see!
'My sweet bride withers at their potency',
'Fool !' said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt ; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycius answer'd, as heart struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost,
'Fool ! Fool !' repreated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov'd ; 'from every ill
'Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
'And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey,
Then Lamia breath'd death breath ; the sophist's eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging : she as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion'd him to be silent ; vainly so,
He look'd and look'd again a level—No !
'A serpent !' echoed he ; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished :
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
And were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay :—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found.
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATION

Date and Occasion of 'Lamia'

Lamia was written in 1819. It was published in 1820. It was written in instalments. The first part was written in the beginning

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of the year, and the second part towards the end. These were his disturbed days. He had been secretly engaged to Fanny Brawne, but had been told by her uncle that unless his financial position improved, marriage was not possible. It was in order to earn money that he agreed to go along with Charles Brown, his literary mentor, to the Isle of Wight to write poem and plays in peace. There Brown persuaded Keats to write a play which he could manage to produce in one of the commercial theatres. This meant ready money, and Keats agreed. Both Brown and Keats started working on the play on the historical plot of an ancient King, Otho, entitled 'Otho, the Great'. Brown was to provide scenario and Keats was to write the poetic dialogue.

But Keats soon got bored with working in collaboration with Brown. The historical plot did not enkindle his imagination. It was at this time that he turned to the writing of *Lamia*. Again, it was Brown who discovered the plot of the poem for him. So he completed the poem.

The Sources of 'Lamia'

The chief source of "Lamia" is the famous 17th century work, the *Anatomy of Melancholy* by Burton. This book is a psychological investigation upon melancholy. It is also full of many classical tales and myths. The story of the serpent woman Lamia is found in this book.

A Greek youth, Lycius in the course of his wanderings, comes across Lamia, a vampire and immediately falls in love with her. She had taken the shape of an attractive young woman, youthful and beautiful. Lycius arranges to marry her and organises a huge feast to celebrate his wedding. But, while the celebrations are going on and reach a climax of festivity, there appears a sage philosopher, Apollonius, as if from nowhere. He penetrates Lamia's dissimulation and challenges her. She enters into a prolonged discussion with Apollonius, but ultimately is defeated, and she vanishes with her feast and the house, leaving Lycius in a state of utter frustration.

Features of 'Lamia'

Lamia is a long narrative. It is shorter than *Endymion* and *Hyperion*. But it is not a fragment. It is a complete poem. *Endymion* is an idyll of love-romance, the celebration of dream comes true. *Hyperion* is a condemnation of the dreamer, and a plea for not escaping into dream but boldly accepting the reality of suffering and misery. *Lamia* begins in the spirit *Endymion*, but ends on the tragic note of the unreality of vision and romantic love which leads to *Hyperion*. Keats has written this poem in the Miltonic mode, and the narrative consequently is halting. *Lamia* has some force of narrative, never before displayed by Keats, though on occasions the poet still suspends narration to focus on subjects of sensuous charm. The poet has harmoniously blended the technique of narration, of drama (of characterization) and of description.

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The verse form of *Lamia* is a modification of Dryden's heroic couplet.

The Plot of 'Lamia'

The main plot of the narrative is the love-episodes of Lycius and Lamia, but the poem opens with a sort of an introductory plot of the love of Hermes, the Greek God, for a Nymph of the wood, who was, however, nowhere to be found. The story of jilted love fitly introduces the plot of *Lamia*, but once introduced the Hermes plot is mentioned no more.

Lamia is serpent-woman. She is immortal. She is a goddess. She falls in love with a moral, a young handsome Corinthean youth, Lycius, with a philosophic bent of mind. She has the ability to change her form. In order to win Lycius's love she changes herself into a beautiful girl and waits by the roadside for Lycius to pass by. When Lycius comes, she acosts him who falls headlong in love with her at first sight.

Both begin to love each other deeply. Lamia gives up her immortality to win the love of Lycius. Lycius after some time brings her to Corinth, and both live together in deep love. Lycius then decides to marry her in a social manner and fixes a day of wedding. A big feast is to be given to the people of Corinthia. When the feast is going on Apollonious, a sage philosopher, friend and teacher of Lycius arrives there. He warns Lycius that he has been deceived. He tells him that the woman whom he loves is not a mortal woman, but a serpent-woman. Lycius enters into an argument in defence of Lamia. But Lamia begins to dissolve into a serpent and vanishes altogether. Lycius, unable to bear the pain of remaining alive without Lamia, dies of the shock.

The Meaning of 'Lamia'

In *Lamia*, as *E. D. Selincourt* says, Keats "concentrates his power upon a dramatic presentation of the antagonism between reason and emotion, logic and passion, science and imagination. The real meaning is summed up in the following key lines :

"Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?
... ...
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unaware a rainbow, as it were while made
The tender personal Lamia melt into a shade."

Perhaps the poem is an allegory to sing out Keats's love for Fanny and Fanny's response to his love. There is a subtle suggestion that Lamia represents Fanny. Apollonius is reality, Lamia is phantom.

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Lycius must be saved from the phantom even, though the salvation kills him. According to *David Perkins*, the poem poses the contradiction between dream and actuality and Keats having been caught in the confusion between the two. So long as Lamia and Lycius remain in pure love, lost in the ecstasy of passion, forgetful of the social world, the dream stays. But the moment Lycius tries to give his dream a social shape of marriage, it vanishes. And here is the dilemma.

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ENDYMION : AN INTRODUCTION

The Poet's Plan to write the Poem

Endymion is one of Keats's early adventures in poetry. The poem reflects Keats' attitude to beauty. It was in 1817 that Keats decided finally to give up medical career in favour of poetry. At first he conceived of this consisting of 4000 lines "of one bare circumstance." It was to be a test of his powers of invention.

Endymion in Greek Mythology

Endymion was a youth renowned for his beauty and his perpetual sleep. As he slept on Mount Latmus in Caria, his beauty warmed the cold hearts of Seleue (the Moon) who came down to him, kissed him and lay by his side. His eternal sleep on Latmus is assigned to different causes but it is generally believed that Seleue had sent him to sleep that she might be able to kiss him.

Keats has certainly made a use of the myth of Endymion to explore his own way to realize the truth that is beauty. But the myth remains only the framework. Keats invents quite a lot. *Aileen Ward* in this connection says : "The legend of Endymion's winning immortal youth through the love of the moon-goddess was only the beginning or rather the ending; he had to fill up his four books with living characters, set them moving in a world of their own and breathe new meaning into the old legend." And this meaning he does indicate right at the beginning of the poem :

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ;
> Its loveliness increases ; it will never
> Pass into nothing ; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health and quite breathing."

Intellectual Background

"All the varied experiences of the last year, hope and discouragement, all the arguments on poetry and art and religion he had heard at Hunts and Haydon's, all his aspirations towards some dimly sensed goal, were stirring in his mind and gathering around the centre of Endymion's quest."—(Aileen Ward, *Biography of Keats*).

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The Poem and its Theme

The theme of the poem is love, beauty and youth. He starts this marvellous adventure, laden with exotic scenery, in mid April and locates it aptly in the Isle of Wight :

"...So I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's dier ;
Now while the early hudders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests ; while the willow trails
Its delicate ambrer ; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of Milk..."

There are certainly inspired pieces in the first book as *Hymn of Pan*. It begins after a description of the festival to the god, which held on a lawn in a forest on a slope of Mount Latmos. The whole assembly is addressed by the old priest who tells the worshippers of the bounties which Pan has heaped upon them. The imagery is well chosen to explain the manifestation of God's energy. All the objects are described in happy phrases. The God is associated with the objects of Nature, every aspect which imagination, hunting "for the objectively mysterious, can comprehend. The hymn ends in the lines in which Pan is :

".....the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven
Then leave the naked brain....."

In the first book we know the puzzle in the hero's mind. He reveals to Peona, his sister, the secret of the passion that is consuming him. He tells of the heavenly visits which he dreams about.

In the second book the hero sets out in search of the celestial visitor and is led through trackless region. There wanders through one faint eternal eventide of gems. This lifeless world changes into a flowing one as he reaches the bower of Adonais, Venus then guides him to mossy bower where he meets the love of his dreams for a brief encounter. She vanishes after meeting two more lovers, Alpheus and Arethusa and praying for their happiness. Endymion looks up and finds "the gaint sea above his head."

Upto this point Endymion has been absorbed in his own dreams and has been searching for his dream goddess of moon but now the fate of others claims his thought. First in the second book he helped Arethusa and Alpheus. Now in the third book he helps Glancus and Scylla. In the celebration which follows, Venus promises Endymion that his love will soon meet him. He faints with joy but when he woke up, found himself back on earth.

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In the fourth book Endymion goes through a series of adventures. Returning to the upper air Endymion almost forgets Cynthia, the dream goddess for the charms of Indian Maid who makes her entry at this point. Her song builds up into a frenzied hymn to Bacchus and "dies away in the mournful reflection that pleasure cannot lighten the load of sorrow."

This mysterious Indian maiden proves to be no other than the goddess herself in disguise. In the meantime he has many olympian visions. All these, his brooding in the Cave of Quietude, his illusions, and awakenings, his farewell to mortality and his reunion with the moon goddess in her real shape, make up the narrative of the poem.

The passage where Keats describes the hero's entrance into the cave of Quietude according to *Aileen Ward* consists of a curious psychological experience which marks a turning point in Endymion's progress and perhaps in Keats' own life also, She says.

"The passage" she says, "he had given to Endymion that evening describes a curious psychological experience.....Endymion. Faced with seeming failure in his quest, enters "the cave of quietude" a retreat "of remotest glooms is the dark depths of consciousness. Here the spirit that has moved beyond all hope of happiness, beyond even the sensation of despair, falls into a dreamless sleep and awakes mysterious ; reviewed, the fever of self-absorption past, to find the world of blessings. So it appears that Keats woke from his own depression at last. "What according to Ward, Keats discovered between writing the first and the last books of Endymion, was a whole new dimension of experience, to be grasped only by surrendering to the wayward and endless richness of the immediate moment.

As an Allegory

It has been said before that Keats while writing the poem was very uncertain of the poem. He was speeding up with the poem very well but never knew how he would finish till he actually finished it. It is mainly because of the action. It takes a sudden turn. The tone also changes from the joyous idealism to sadness. It is miraculous how the poem ends with proving the hero's dreams as true. Peona is left lost in wonder. For many people the ending does remain a puzzle : Most critics have moralized this poem as an allegory of a kind of super-sexual love for a supersensuous beauty. Endymion's wanderings are regarded as the quest of the poetic soul for communion with the ideal and his painful vacilation between the maiden and the goddess and the final change of one into another are taken to indicate the seeming conflict and ultimate of the actual beauties of this world with the ideal Beauty. *Sidney Colvin* sees in the poem a vital, subtly involved and passionately tentative spiritual parable, the parable of the poetic soul in man seeking communion with the spirit of essential Beauty in the world. *Colvin* says that the poem "can be read as an intermittent parable of love and beauty. But the allegorical elements in the poem, he insists, "are in the shape of highly suggestive

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intimation, not in a consisting scheme. To attempt to bring these to a single focus, to make of them an articulate and easily comprehensible whole, to speak of stages of discipline and of philosophic systems as the meaning of Endymion, is to force facts and ignore contradictions, to miss, in deed, the spirit of the poem and the interesting light it throws on Keats's own way of making poetry."

But *Aileen Ward* does not accept this allegorical interpretation. According to her, Keats with this hunger for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts was not the kind of poet to contrive an allegorical system. *Aileen Ward* also points out that none of the first reades of this poem found any hint of allegory in it. According to this critic, this poem is about sensual love. Endymion represents not the poetic soul but the ideal lover, his adventures are an assertion of "the holiness of the heart's affections". And it is only because the poem expresses such an exalted idea of sexual love that the Victorian critics with their prudish outlook regarded Endymion's quest as having a different goal.

Discarding the allegorical approach to *Endymion, Aileen Ward* goes saying that the poem certainly has a symbolic significance. This could be defined simply as a youngman's discovery of the true nature of love. Sexual love as Endymion describes it near the end of the first book is the highest reach of happiness, and as such it is the crown of all other values and the worthiest goal of our strivings.

> "Feel we these thing ?—that moment have we stept
> Into a sort of oneness, and our state
> Is like a floating Spirits. But there are
> Richer entanglements, enthralments far
> More self-destroying, leading by degrees,
> To the chief intensity ; the crown of these,
> Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
> Upon the forehead of humanity."

Faults

Endymion is an interesting poem though full of obvious faults of immaturity. It is a young man's poem about an experience of youngmanhood. That is why it is compared to *Venus and Adonais* of Shakespeare. But there is much difference in their contemporary conditions.

Style

The style of *Endymion* is largely that of "I Stood Tip-Toe" and *Sleep and Poetry*. This is luscious, half feminine and often beautiful. There is a distinct growth, of course, in craftsmanship but the most important point about Keats at this state is his depth and breath of philosophic apprehension of myth. If we try to search for the meaning of the poem in the organism of the structure, the divided self of Keats might be more clear, though it will affirm his inclination on the realistic side even at this stage. The control in certain portions

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of the poem is uncertain partly because Keats was a young and indisciplined artist and partly as Douglas Bush says, because of, "Endymion is a confessional poem growing out of immediate turmoil of spirit". Upto the last moment, the hero as well as the poet till the last moment of his life is subject to conflicting desires. Bush points out very aptly this conflict in Keats : "And in addition to difficulties in the conscious exposition of inner conflict, there are unconscious implications, so that at times what is said in the lines seems to be partly contradicted by what can be read between them."

Comparison with Shelley's 'Alastor'

In this poem actually Keats, for the first time, is trying very seriously, to answer the fundamental questions about the relation of the artist to his art and to the world. We can compare the poem to Shelley's *Alastor*. In *Alastor* the hero is a romantic idealist for whom the world of humanity has no satisfaction. He gets frustrated in quest and dies in solitude. Of course, there is idealism in Endymion also. The hero searches for ideal beauty and truth. The difference lies in the fact that inspite of his love of "poetic luxuries", as Bush would call it, and devotion to art, Keats did share the common experience of mankind. It takes, it is true, the whole life of Endymion to understand that only through participation in life, the ideal can be realized. He says :

> "Now if this earthly love has power to make
> Men's being mortal, immortal ; to shake
> Ambition from their memories, and brim
> Their measure of content : what merest whim.
> Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
> To one who keeps within his steadfast aim
> A love immortal, an immortal too"

By this time he also realizes that without humanity, all the pleasures which nature provides will fade. He asks :

> "What I know not : but who, of men can tell
> That flowers would bloom, or that green fruits would swell
> To melting pulp.....
> If human soul did never kiss and greet ?"

Some critics raise the question about the ending of the poem. Is it a mere contrivance, a wrenching of the psychological narrative to the foregone mythological conclusion ?

Ambiguity

As a matter of fact there is ambiguity in the poem. The poem's ending is presented in highly ambiguous way and it could be interpreted on two different levels. On the mythological level, the maid—Indian maiden—is only the goddess in a disguise to test Endymion's fidelity. This is a fairy tale device. So when Endymion seems to give up human love and asserts his devotion to "things of light" the

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maiden turns back into the goddess and rewards him with the "immortality of passion" promised in the myth.

Symbolism

But on the symbolic level, the maiden represents a new conception of human life, so when he decides to give up idealism, he realizes that to deny the maiden's love is to deny the real love which leads to fulfilment. Thus we find Keats sandwiched between two claims—one is of the legend and the other is of his experiences. But decidedly he is more attracted towards the human love.

The Search for Truth through Myth in 'Endymion'

The real significance of the poem lies in search of truth, through the "bare-circumstance" of this legend. Keats was the first poet in English who found a human meaning in the myth. He did not fit myths into an allegorical pattern as Elizabethans did or did not only use them to decorative effect as the eighteenth century people did. Keats's contribution lies in finding, as Jeffrey suggested, that the Greek myths were relevant to our inner experiences.

As a Song of Innocence and Experience

"Endymion is a 'song of innocence and experience' transposed into a mythical mode. Through Endymion's adventures, Keats attempted to state, however, groupingly, his belief in the necessity of growth, the value of the progression into experience the impossibility of regression into innocence, the goal of a more complex harmony of being.—"—(*Aileen Ward*).

The Value of this Poem

Keats himself valued it in this way : "It is as good as I could make it by myself". A year later he wrote to Hessey about it, "Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece and with that view asked advice and trembled over every page it would not have been written. That which is creative must create itself. In Endymion I leaped head long into the sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the surroundings, the quick and the rocks, that if I had stayed upon the green shore and piped silly pipe....."

On this Aileen Ward's comment is, "Endymion made Keats a poet, whatever Keats made of Endymion. In the very experience of failure, he discovered the truth of achievement. "That which is creative must create itself."

Despite the elements of discord, or, perhaps, to an extent, because of them, Endymion remains a typical work of romantic art, beautiful in parts and patches, incoherent in its whole.*

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* This analysis of *Endymion* is based on Aileen Ward's analysis of this poem in her look, *John Keats : The Making of a Poet* (New York, 1963).

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(a)

TO PAN

[From "ENDYMION", Book I]

"O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness ;
Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken ;
And through whole solemn hours dust sit, and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds.
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth—
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrin—do thou now,
By all the trembling mezes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan !

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through many meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms : O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas
Their fairest-blossom'd beans and poppied corn ;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee ; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness ; penut-up butterflies
Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh-budding year
All is completions—be quickly near.
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine !

"Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service ; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half-sleeping fit ;
Or upward ragged precipices flit

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To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewilder'd shepherds to their path again ;
Or to tread breathless round the forthy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeing ;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping.
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak-apples, and fir-cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr kin.

"O Hearkener to the loud-clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn,
When shouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen : Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all whether hearms :
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors :
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows !

"Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings, such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain : be still the leaven
That, spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :
Be still a symbol of immensity ;
A firmament reflected in a sea ;
An element filling the space between ;
An unknown—but no more ; we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble Paean
Upon thy Mount Lycean !"

PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. Pan was the Greek god of shepherds and of every thing connected with the pastoral life. He is addressed here as the lover of Syrinx. The huge and mighty tree trunks are made to build the dwelling—place of Pan. The rough trunks of the trees cover the continual sounds of the objects of nature, the mysterious things, and the birth and death of the flowers. The flowers grow in full peace

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and remain hidden from the common view. Pan loves to see the tree-nymphs dressing their dishevelled hair. The reddish-brown hazel nut trees look dark because they are growing in the deep forest. Pan sits all the solemn hours in the day or night listening of the growth of the pipy hemlock. Pan remembers the painful memories when he pursued Syrinx. Syrinx was an Arcadian nymph beloved by Pan. She fled into the river Ladon to escape him and was turned into a reed, which Pan then used as a flute.

Stanza 2. All the objects of Nature are devoted to Pan whom they consecrate to serve. Every one of the denizens of the forest wants to do some service to Pan either by singing or blossoming or blowing. The doves are singing sweetly to balm the wounds of Pan who is love-sick, and is wandering in the evening through the bright meadows. The fig-trees have offered their golden honey-combs, and the village fields have sacrificed to him their beautiful beans and poppied corn. The young ones of the linnet are devoted to him while still unborn, and the butterfly white still a chrysalis consecrates itself to Pan. The strawberries have reserved their cool shadows during the summer. The whole year is devoted to Pan with the dawn of the spring when fruits and flowers will blossom and the winds will shake the pine trees growing on the mountain tops.

Stanza 3. Every Faun and Satyr is willing bondman to serve pan. Unlike Shakespeare's Puck who takes delight in mischief, they take delight in pleasing Pan. They sometimes surprise the half slumbering hare by waking him up, perhaps, against some danger. Sometimes they fly to the mountains to save the poor lamb from the clutches of the eagle. By some mysterious attraction they bring the misguided travellers back to their path. Sometimes for the fun of Pan they walk over furious seas to collect strange shells and then to throw them into the sea-nymph's caves. They (Faun and Satyr) themselves remain hidden an giggle at the out-peeping of their victims. They jump and throw silvery-oak apples, and brown fit-cones at each other. The attention of Pan is drawn by the sound thus echoing about him.

Stanza 4. There are many duties which Pan performs. He listens to the shearing of the lambs, the sound produced by clapping and the bleating of the disappointed ram. He blows the horn to scare away the wild boars who harm the corn in the fields and thus makes the hunters angry who lose their prey. The wild boars get alert and run away. Pan breathes some magic gas that destroys fungus and pestilence to save the fields from infection and harm. Pan produces mysterious sounds by playing on his reed pipe which faintly resounds the hollow grounds, and then melts away cheerlessly on barren moors. The music is cheerless because Pan produces Panic fear by the music. Pan is the guardian of all universal knowledge, also the presiding deity of the universe. Pan is the son of Dryope and begotten by Hermes. All the denizens of the wood pay their homage to pan by wearing leaves on their brow.

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Stanza 5. Pan is the mysterious lodge (store-house) of thoughts that rise in loveliness. These thoughts range from the earth to the highest heaven, and which afterwards leave the human brain empty. The thought is not clear enough. Pan is perhaps the inspiring deity of obstinate questionings of sense and outward things. Pan is pervasive transforming influence in giving an ethereal touch to things dull and mundane. He is a symbol of mysterious things. He has the class conception of things heavenly. As the sky is reflected clearly in the sea so is every thought reflected clearly in the mind of Pan. He is the guardian of all knowledge that lies in between the sky and the earth. Pan is a myterious figure and we know nothing else about him. The young friends of Endymion request Pan to receive their humble worship in the form of loud applause and prayers of devotion. They pray that Pan should remain for ever the source of inspiration to all kinds of thoughts earthly and divine.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Introduction

The Ode to Pan is from Book I of *Endymion*, a poetic romance by Keats. The complete work narrates the love story of Endymion, a shepherd-prince who lives on Mount Latmos in Greece, and the moon, goddess Diana. Attracted by the beauty of the shepherd, Endymion, the goddess comes to earth to visit him, but does not reveal her name and appears only in fleeting visions. The poem opens with a great feast to Pan, at which Endymion is present as prince and chief among the shepherds of Latmos. *The Ode to Pan* is a song chanted on this occasion. It is sung by the comrades to young Endymion while the priest offers the sacrifice to Pan.

Development of Thought in the Poem

Pan is the god of shepherds. His dwelling is in the woods. It conceals the beauty of the nature. Pan loves to see the fair nymphs dressing their hair, and hears the music of the reeds. He is also the lover of Syrinx, an Arcadian nymph. She fled into the river Ladon to escape him and was turned into a reed, which Pan used as a flute. (Stanza 1). Every object of Nature contributes something as a mark of devotion to Apollo. The fig-trees sacrifice their fruits, the bees offer their golden boney-combs, and to village fields their beans and poppied corn. The birds offer their offsprings to sing for him and butterflies their beautiful wings (stanza 2). The faun and satyr are always willing bondmen to Pan. They surprise the hare, save poor lamb from the eagle, show path to the magnified travellers and tread round the seas. The sea-nymphs gather shells and shower them at one another giggling in sheer merriment and fun. The sea-nymphs collect the cones of apples and throw them at one another (stanza 3). Apollo is the listener to the loud-clapping shears, winder of the horn, breather round the farms, strangle ministrant of underscribed sounds and dread opener of the mysterious doors (Stanza 4). Pan is the inspirer and receptacle of philosophical thoughts. He ennobles into

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sublimity the dull earth. He is a symbol of immensity. The young friends of Endymion, request Pan to receive their humble worship in the form of loud applause and prayers of devotion.

Most Beautiful of the Four

Of the four poems—the Odes to Pan, Neptune, Sorrow, and Diana—the Ode to pan is perhaps the most beautiful "sung by the Latmian shepherds. It is at once a thanksgiving for the bounties of a fruitful spring and a prayer to the god to constitute his favour. Pan was the Greek god of shepherds and of everything connected with pastoral life. He is here addressed as the lover of Syrinx as caring for birds and insects, fruits and flowers and as caring for animals, and for the mythical folk of the woods and waters, fauns, satyrs, and naiads ; while in the last stanza the thought becomes mystical. Pan being regarded as the fount in-head of solitary musings, such as come to those who wander alone in places."

Significance in the Development of Keats's Poetic Art

This Ode with its fellow odes in the *Endymion* has a singificant place in the development of Keats's art in as much as Keats parted with the influence of the eighteenth century poets in its composition. The Poem manifests the influence of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and *Intimation of Immortality*. It is predominated by a romantic element. It has a sensuous appeal and is rich in the description of Nature. Its sensuous appeal can be seen in the lines such as the following :

Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken.

Its nature-decriptions can be enjoyed through passages such as the following :

O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles,
Passion their voices cooingly' mong myrtles
What time thou wanderest at eventide,
Through sunny meadows that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms.....
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn.
To sing for thee : low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness ; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings.....

Fusion of the Pagan and Hellenic Elements

Keats recited this poem (*Endymion*) to Wordsworth at the house of Haydon in 1817, when Wordsworth's slighting comment was "a very pretty piece of paganism". But the poem is remarkble for its Greek love of myth and beauty. Sidney Colvin believes that the first and the fifth stanzas of this ode can be traced to the influence of Wordsworth. According to J. C. Grierson and J. C. Smith, in the *Hymn to pan* there is more than one thread in the web.

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Diction and Style

The poem is quite musical. It reveals Keats's love for fine phrases and felicity of expression. The phrases such as "the trembling mazes that she ran,' 'fairest-blossom'd', 'low-creeping', 'pent-up' evince this. Yet it belongs to Keats's immatured period. His command of words is not mature enough to express deep thoughts plainly. The last stanza of the poem is the hodge-podge of ideas and does not make such sense.

Conclusion

But the faults of immaturity cannot counterbalance its merits and beauties. As stated by A. R. Weekes, "It is yet immature, and his early defects are still prominent, but despite, these, there is in all these odes a power, a richness of poetry, which no isolated faults can counterbalance." Douglas Bush is all praise for this poem.. In his view the *Ode to Pan* is the most sustained good writing, and by far the richest mythological recreation that Keats had yet achieved. C. H. Herford liked this poem very much and praised its delight and gusto.

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(b)

TO NEPTUNE

[From "ENDYMION," Book III, Lines 944-989]

"King of the stormy sea !
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
Of elements ! Eternally before
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock.
At thy fear'd trident shrinking doth unlock
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home
Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.
Thou frownest, and old Aeolus thy foe,
Skulls to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
Gulfs in the morning light, and scuds along
To bring thee nearer to that golden song
Apollo singeth, while his chariot
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
For scenes like this ; an empire stern hast thou ;
And it hath furrow'd that large front ; yet now,
As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit
To blend and interknit
Subdued majesty with this glad time.
O shell-borne king sublime !
We lay our hearts before thee evermore—
We sing, and we adore !

"Breathe softly, flutes !
Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes ;
Nor be the trumpet heard ! O vain, O vain !
Not flowers budding in an April rain,
Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow—
No, nor the Aeolian twang of love's own bow
Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
Of goddess Cytherea !
Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
On our souls' sacrifice.

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"Bright-winged Child !
Who has another care when thou hast smiled ?
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
All death-shadows and glooms that overcast
Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.
O sweetest essence, sweetest of all minions !
God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,
And painting bosoms bare !
Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser
Of light in light ! delicious poisoner !
Thy venom'd goblet will we puaff until
We fill—we fill !
And by thy Mother's lips——"

PARAPHRASE

Neptune is the God of the stormy sea. He is the co-inheritor of elements. Jove, Neptune, and Pluto were the sons of Saturn They divided his inheritance between them. Jove becoming king of heaven and earth and ruler of the gods while Neptune became king of the sea and Pluto of the underworld. The waves of the sea bow to him in obedience. The hard rocks fear his sceptre, shrink in fear and unloosen their deep foundation. As the waves strike against the rock, the hissing sound is produced. The rivers come and mingle n the sea, losing their identity. As soon as the sea god appears iabove the waves, the winds retreat to the cave from which they have been summoned. As the silver gleams from the diadem crown of the sea— the dark clouds wither away. Neptune drives his car not over the taps of the waves, but through the troughs or hollow gulfs between them. The rolling waves produce music, and as they rise they reach near the sun god Apollo who is singing song and waiting for them at the door of heaven.

Stanza 1. The sea, the empire of Neptune, is constantly disturbed by the storms. As a result deep lines of depression have been produced by the mountain waves upon the ocean. The empire of Neptune is thus stern. Naptune is, therefore, not a happy company for the scenes of marriage feast, scenes of calm and rejoicing. (The sea more often parts lovers than reunites them). Yet now, as a god newly descended from heaven, he has come to add solemnity to the joy of festivity. Neptune is represented as riding in a sea-shell for chariot. The drowned lovers offer their worship, and sing songs in praise of Neptune.

Stanza 2. The drowned lovers forbid harsh music of the marriage festivity of Diana. There should not be the rough and loud sound of the trumpet they desire. There may be soft sweet notes of melody vibrating from the soothing lutes, which may be in harmony with the sweet and tender temperament of Diana, and the calm and happy occasion of the marriage ceremony. But their request is useless because there is no music in the world which may suit the soft ear of

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Goddess Cytherea. Neither the flowers blooming in the month of May nor the breath of sleeping dove, nor the song of the flowing river, nor even the music as soft as that made by Aeolian harp can mingle music fit for the soft ear of Cytherea. The drowned lovers have sacrificed their lives for the sake of beauty. They therefore request Cytherea, the white Queen of beauty to be kind and magnanimous, at least for the sake of their sacrifice to cast her fair eyes on them.

Stanza 3. The drowned lovers now address Cupid who is the child of Venus and carries the bright wings on his shoulder. When Cupid smiles, there can be no cause of cares and anxieties. Love-intoxicated persons forget every trouble or misfortune. Such is the magic of love. There are unfortunate persons in the world because their loves are cut short by untimely death. Life is overcast with gloom and disillusionment there. But all the death like shadows and disappointments disappear at the sight and touch of the light wing of Cupid. He is the marrow of life. Of all the dear things in the world he is the sweetest, he being the god of love, and love being the sweetest essence of life. Love is light amidst glooms. It is also a delicate poisoner. The crowned lovers want to drink the cup of sweet poison.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The Ode to Neptune is a part of Book III of *Endymion*. It is an address to Neptune as well as to Venus and Cupid. The first stanza is addressed to Neptune ; in the other two Venus and Cupid are invoked. Venus is the goddess of Love and Cupid her son. The address is sung by the chorus of the dead lovers made immortal by a touch of Endymion.

In *Endymion*, the lover of Diana pursues her in the depths of the ocean, and he wonders all the while how the moon moves his heart and urges him to pursue her. In his journey through the deep he meets Glaucus, who again tells Endymion the story of his love for Scylla, how he was enchanted by Circe who condemned him to thousand years of old age in the sea. It was prophesied in a mysterious scroll, which Glaucus found in the hand of some drowning man, that the touch of Endymion would deliver Glaucus from the enchantment of Circe, and actually he was disenchanted by the very touch of Endymion. Not only was Glaucust disenchanted but also Scylla, and all her dead lovers were freed from the submarine palace in which they had been locked up. They all attained immortality by the touch of Endymion and all these lovers joined the revelry in the Hall of Neptune in order to sing the hymn to Neptune, the god of the ocean.

Development of Thought

The Chorus of the lovers now enlivened by the touch of Endymion say that Neptune is the king of the stormy sea. The mountains are shaken at the trident of Neptune. The rivers mingle and lose their identity. The old Aeolus withdraws in fear, the dark clouds

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faint and the bright waves remain cradled in the morning light. Neptune is stern and, therefore, he is not a happy company to the marriage feast of Diana. Even the flowers of the April rain, the breath of sleeping dove, the flow of the river and the music made by an Aeolian harp cannot mingle music fit for the ear of Venus. Cupid is a brightwinged child. At the smile of Cupid cares are no longer to be existing. He is god of warm pulses, dishevelled hair and panting bosoms bare. He shows light in the surrounding gloom. He is a delicious poisoner.

Autobiographical Element

Had the poet not met Fanny by the time he wrote *Endymion*, he must not have written this poem. His descriptions of 'unfortunates on earth' and 'death shadows, and glooms' refer to his own life. These lines anticipate the gloom and ghost-like visions of his future life. Chapman's influence is also visible in the poem.

Other Qualities

The *Ode to Neptune* is remarkable for its pictorial quality, for its sensuousness, and the treatment of Nature. The stubborn rock shrinking and hissing into foam, the mountain-rivers, losing themselves in the wide home of the capricious bosom of the sea, the old Aeolus skulking to his cavern—all these are rich in description. The description of the dark clouds fainting and the bright team of Neptune gulfing in the morning light is important not only for the beauty of nature but also for the pictorial quality. A lovely description of Nature can be seen in the following passage :

> O vain, O vain
> Not flowers budding in an April rain,
> Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow.

For sensuousness the following lines are remarkable :

> God of warm pulses and dishevell'd hair
> And panting bosoms bare !

These lines can be compared with other similar lines :

> Light feets, dark voilet eyes and parted hair
> Soft dimpled hands ; white neck and creamy breasts.

The images used in the poem are really beautiful. Dark faint clouds, bright team gulfs in the morning, rolling waters, howling storms and stubborn rocks drawn for the imagery of the poem. Pictures are charming and lively ; they are quite sensuous ; the abstract is made concrete.

The pagan and Greek elements are fused. Greek reference and name abound in the poem. The poem has a lyric charm.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

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1. **King of the stormy sea :** Neptune, the god of sea.

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2. **Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor of elements :** Jove, Neptune, and Pluto were the sons of Saturn. They divided his inheritance among them. Jove became the king of heaven and earth and the ruler of gods ; Neptune became the king of the sea and Pluto became the king of the underworld.

5. **Trident :** The pronged sceptre carried by Neptune, and used by him to Produce earthquakes.

Shrinking : Trembling in fear.

Doth unlock its deep foundation : The very foundation of the stubborn rock is threatened by the sceptre of Neptune.

6. **Hissing into foam :** The waves of the sea produce a noise when they strike against rock, etc. This sound is imagined by Keats to be that of hissing.

7. **All mountain rivers...flow :** The rivers flowing from the mountains, mingle with the sea and lose their identity.

Aeolus : The god of storm and wind.

10. **Skulls :** Withdraws in fear.

Gruff : Rude.

11-13. **Dark clouds...blue dominion :** Neptune is conceived as wearing a silver crown of sunlight. When from the silver crown of Neptune, which is that of sunlight, a silver gleam slants over blue dominion, the dark clouds wither away. The meaning of these lines is not very much clear. This seems to be a scientific imagery or it may also be possible that Keats is not mature enough to express deep thought clearly.

Blue dominion : The blue realm of the sea.

17. **Thou art not for scenes like this :** Neptune is of the stern nature, and, therefore, is not a happy company for the wedding feast of goddess Diana. Diana is very soft and the occasion is that of calm and rejoicing. The sea more often parts lovers than reunites them.

19. **Furrow'd :** Produced deep lines of depression as they are actually produced by the mountain-waves upon the ocean.

Large front : Broad brow.

19-20. **Yet now.....glad times :** Yet now as a god newly descended from heaven, thou art come to add solemnity to our joy.

23. **Shall borne :** Neptune was often represented as riding in sea-shell for chariot.

25. **Breath softly, flutes :** Let the flutes be very soft and sweet in their music.

27. **Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes :** The drowned lovers appeal to the flutes that they may vibrate very sweetly and soothingly so that it may not sound harsh on the soft ears of Diana.

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28. **Nor be the trumpet heard :** Trumpet is high sounding musical instrument. It will not play on softly to meet the tender ears of goddess Diana.

31. **Aeolian twang :** Music as soft as that made by an Aeolian harp, a peculiar form of instrument which was hung up out of doors and played on by the winds. It consisted of a number of strings, turned in unison, and stretched on a frame resembling a box open at the sides.

33. **Cytherea :** An epithet of Venus, from Cytherea, an Island sacred to the goddess, who rose from the sea near its coasts. The whole stanza is marked for its lyric beauty, emotional touch and simplicity.

36. **Brightwinged child :** Cupid, the son of Venus, who carries bright wings on his shoulder.

37. **Who has another care when thou hast smiled :** All the cares and anxieties disappear at the smile of Cupid.

38. **Unfortunntes on earth :** Because their loves were cut short by untimely death.

39. **Death-shadows :** When disappointed at the untimely death of his beloved, the lover is haunted by the shadows of death.

Glooms : Disillusionment.

40. **Fann'd away by thy light pinions :** All the glooms and death-shadows disappear at the sight of the light wings of Cupid.

41. **Essence :** Milton's use of this word in *Paradise Lost* may account for its presence here.

42. **God of warm Pulses :** The god lovers.

43. **Eclipser of light in light :** Love is the supreme source of happiness. In the presence of love, which is the light in darkness, all other lights are eclipsed.

Delicious Poisoner : Love is poisoner in the sense that most of the troubles of life follow love, but even the misfortunes of love-affairs are sweet.

45. **Thy venom'd goblet :** The cup of sweet poison.

Quaff : drink.

48. **The Mother's lips :** The song breaks off as the gate of Neptune's palace opens again to admit fresh guests.

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27

(c)

TO SORROW

[From "Endymion", Book IV, Lines 146—]

(I)

"O Sorrow !
Why dost borrow
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips ?—
To give maiden blushes
To the white rose bushes ?
Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips ?

(II)

"O Sorrow !
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye ?—
To give the glow-worm light ?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry ?

(III)

"O Sorrow !
Why dost borrow
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue ?—
To give at evening pale
Unto the nightingale,
That thou mayst listen the cold dews among ?

(IV)

"O Sorrow !
Why dost borrow
Heart's lightness from the marriment of May ?
A lover would not tread
A cowslip on the head,
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—

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Nor any drooping flower
Held sacred for thy bower.
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

(V)

"To Sorrow
I bade good morrow,
And thought to leave her far away behind.
But cheerly, cheerly,
She loves me dearly :
She is so constant to me and so kind :
I would deceive her,
And so leave her,
But ah ! she is so constant and so kind.

(VI)

"Beneath my palm-trees by river side.
I sat a-weeping ; in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.

(VII)

"Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side,
I sat a-weeping ! what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm-trees by a river side ?

(VIII)

"And, as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers : the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—
'Twas Bacchus and his crew !
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin !
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on fame ;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley.
To scare thee, Melancholy !
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name :
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when in June
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon :—
I rush'd into the folly !

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(IX)

"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
With sidelong laughing ;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite ;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

(X)

Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye.
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate
Your lutes, and gentler fate ?—
'We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing,
Bacchus young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
We dance before him through kingdoms wide :—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy !'

(XI)

"Whence came ye jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye,
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
You nuts in oak-tree cleft ?—
'For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms
And cold mushrooms ;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ;
Great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth !
To our mad minstrelsy !'

(XII)

"Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants :
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughters mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rower's toils :
With toying oars and silken sails they glide
Nor care for wind and tide.

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(XIII)

"Mounted on Pantners' furs and lions' manes.
From rear to van they scour about the Plains :
A three days' journey in a moment done ;
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

(XIV)

"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
Before the vine-wreath crown !
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
To the silver cymbals' ring !
To the silver cymbals' ring !
I saw the whelming vintage holy pierce
Old Tartary the fierce !
The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptres vail.
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail :
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
And all his priesthood moans,
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.
Into these regions came I, following him,
Sick-hearted, weary—so I took a whim
To stray into these forests drear,
Alone, without a peer :
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

(XV)

"Young stranger !
I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime ;
Alas ! 'tis not for me !
Bewitch'd I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

(XVI)

"Come then, Sorrow !
Sweetest Sorrow !
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast :
I thought to leave thee,
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best
"There is not one,
No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;
Thou art her mother,
And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

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PARAPHRASE

Stanza 1. The Indian maiden representing Endymion's earthly love asks Sorrow why she takes away the natural glow of health from the rose-red lips. She takes away the rosy blushes from the face of maiden and invigorates the roses with them. The Indian maid asks if it is the dewy hand of sorrow that paints the rosy lips on the daisy-petals.

Stanza 2. The Indian maiden asks Sorrow why she steals away the lustrous passion from the bright eyes of a lover. She transfers the passion from the bright eyes of a lover to the glow-worm. The singer (The maiden) wants to know if sorrow takes away the passion from the bright eye to make on dark night the shower of the salt water of the sea look bright, on syren shores where the syrens lived and sang their songs of enchantment in order to lure away the boatsmen and the travellers.

Stanza 3. Why does Sorrow take away the power of song from a mournful person to offer it again to the nightingale, to listen to the mournful songs from the nightingale at evening when the cold dew drops begin to fall upon the grass ?

Stanza 4. The Indian maid asks Sorrow why she takes away the lightness of heart from the merriment of May. The Indian maid reproaches Sorrow. Lovers do not deserve to be so harshly treated and robbed of their gaiety. No true lover would imagine any of the flower the cow-slip or any drooping flower, that are symbolic of sorrow even though he may dance madly from eve till dawn.

Stanza 5. The Indian maid reproached Sorrow and bade her good-bye. She thought to leave Sorrow far behind to live a life of pleasure. But Sorrow loved her deeply. Sorrow is very kind and true to her. The Indian maid thought todeceive Sorrow. But Sorrow is very constant to her.

Stanza 6. Beneath the Indian palm tree the Indian maid sat a-weeping all alone. No body sympathised her. She went on shedding tears that could fill up the water lily cups. The tears are usually warm, but her tears are as cold and painful as her anxiety to meet her lover.

Stanza 7. Beneath the palm tree the Indian maid sat a-weeping. She was like the fair women of the classical mythology who were wooed by gods in disguise and forsaken, or were distressed by the mysterious absence of their lovers. The Indian maid was cheated by Endymion, the unknown lover from some far off land. Now in utter disillusionment she is hiding herself beneath the dark palm-tree by the river side.

Stanza 8. As the Indian maid was sitting a-weeping beneath the palm tree, there came Bacchus and his merry company all revelling

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in pleasures. They were all drunk and the streams of wine were overflowing their mouth. The solemn trumpet was sounding. The sparkling notes of melody produced by the meeting of the cymbals were making merry din. They came like a moving garden crowned with green leaves. Their faces were flushed because they were heavily drunk. They were dancing madly through the valley to drive away melancholy. But by that time melancholy was a simple name to the Indian maid. She soon forgot her sorrow as winter with berried holly is forgotten in summer when the tall chestnut trees keep away the light of the sun and moon. The Indian maid committed the folly of forgetting sorrow. She realised later on that Sorrow was her true friend. The whole stanza is an illustration of Keats's pictorial quality.

Stanza 9. Bacchus was standing on his chariot playing with his ivydart. He was dancing and laughing. Wine was overflowing his mouth and moistening his plump white arms. His shoulders were so white that they could tempt even the goddess Venus to bite or kiss them. These lines excite strong sex-desire, and are, therefore important as an illustration of sensuousness in the poetry of Keats. By the side of Bacchus was riding Silenus on his ass a demigod, usually represented as "a fat, jolly old man", crowned with flower, and always intoxicated. He was the foster-father of Bacchus. The picture of Silenus, heavily drunk, crowned with flowers and riding on a horse excites laughter.

Stanza 10. The Indian maid asks the women in the company of Bacchus where they are coming from, why they are so happy and why they have left their pleasant and easy life at home, and their musical instruments. To this the damsel's reply that they are following Bacchus. Bacchus conquers everyone he meets. The damsels have been so much bewitched by dissolute Bacchus that they have lost all sense of modesty. Whatever, good or bad may happen to them, they are determined to dance in the company of Bacchus throughout the wide world. The maidens then invite the Indian maid to join their sweet company and to dance with them.

Stanza 11. The Indian maid then asks jolly Satyrs where they have come from, why they are so happy, why they have left their forest haunts and nuts in the hollow of oak trees. They reply that they have left their hearth, yellow brooms and mushrooms for wine. They follow Bacchus who is the god of breathless cups and chirping mirth. Bacchus is the god of heavy drinking.

Stanza 12. The Indian maid has been tempted by breathless cups and the chriping mirth and has joined the company of dissolute young Bacchus, the merry damsels and jolly Satyrs. They all are now roaming over wide streams and mountains. Sometimes, Bacchus breaks his journey and pitches his tent made of ivy creepers. The tiger, the leopard and the Asian elephants drive his car, and pant when tired. The Carvan marches on with song and dance. The **striped Zebra, sleek Arabian prance (horse), web-footed alligators**

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and crocodiles are also in the jocund company. Small healthy children ride the backs of the alligators and crocodiles, laugh and make merry noise. The lump infant laughers are mimicking the coil of the sea man and the toil of the galley-rowers. The boat men and the sailors when flushed with wine row their boats with soft delicate sails and toying oars without caring for the wind and tide. The children are also intoxicated. They are also courageous and ride over web footed alligators and crocodiles without fear.

Stanza 13. Mounting on the furs of panthers and the manes of lions, Bacchus and his followers move about disorderly in search of game. They more so fast that three days journey is completed in a moment. Always in the morning mounting on the angry unicorn they hunt the wild animals with spear and horn.

Stanza 14. Egypt bowed down before Bacchus. The desert of Abyssinia came under his influence. The Abbyssinians began tossing the cymbals. Even the unconquereable Tartars had to kneel before the god of the breathless cups. The Kings of India bowed in homage and scatter pearls froms their treasures. The idea is that wherever Bacchus went he conquered the nations and the people. The people could not resist the temptation of wine. They all bowed down before the god of wine and drank heavily. Seeing their conquests Brahma and his ministers became anxious and sad, fearing they may lose their empire. The Indian maid visited all these places with Bacchus and his followers. At last she got tired and grew sick of wine and revelry and stole away alone into the thick forests.

Stanza 15. Addressing Endymion, the Indian maid says that she has been wandering in vain throughout the world in search of pleasure. She thinks that happiness is not in her fate. Her fostering star does not lead her to happiness. She has been charmed by some evil influence. She is destined to waste the prime of her bubbling youth in weeping.

Stanza 16. The Indian maid has sought for pleasure in vain. She therefore invites Sorrow whom she will nurse like her own babe. While in search of pleasure the Indian maid had thought of receiving and deserting her. But now of all the world she loves Sorrow. There is no one in the world except Sorrow to console her afflicted heart. Sorrow is now everything to the Indian maid. She is her mother ; her playmate and her wooer.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Introduction

Ode to Sorrow is a lovely lyric. It occurs in Book IV of *Endymion*. It is a song sung by the Indian Maid who won Endymion from the pursuit of Cynthia (Diana) for some time. The Indian Maid stands for the sensuous love while Cynthia stands for the ideal love. Endymion soon forgets the Indian Maid and begins afresh his pursuit for Cynthia in order to attain ideal love. Endymion later on finds that the

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Indian Maid is nobody else but Cynthia herself. The poem is rich in Greek mythology, romantic touch and sensuous appeal.

Subject Matter

In the words of *Sidney Colvin*, "It begins with a tender invocation to Sorrow, and then with a first change of movement, conjures up the image of a deserted maidenhood beside Indian streams ; till suddenly with another change, comes the irruption of the Asain Bacchus on his march : next follows the detailed picture of the god and of his rout, suggested in part by the famous Titian at the National Gallery ; and then, arranged as if for music, the challenge of the maiden to the Meanads and Satyrs, and their choral answers ;

"Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye,
So many, and so many and such glee ?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
You lutes and gentler fate ?"

Development of Thought

The Indian Maid asks Sorrow why she takes from her votaries health, bright eyes, the powers of song, lightness of heart ? Sorrow steals away stealthily the natural hue of health and gives maiden blushes to the white rose bushes. Sorrow takes away the lustrous passion from the bright eyes of a lover, gives light to glow-worm and tinges the salt sea-spray on syren shores. Sorrow takes away the power of song to give it to the Nightingale. Sorrow takes away lightness of heart from the merriment of May. Though a lover may dance from night till dawn he will not crush the drooping flowers symbolic of Sorrow. There is a change in idea. The Indian maid bids goodmorrow to Sorrow, but Sorrow loves her dearly.

Then the Indian Maid describes her past life and adventure. Sitting under an Indian palm tree, she was roused from her sorrowful loneliness by the appearance of Bacchus and his band of revellers, who called on her to follow, Joining their company she passed through various lands but at last grew weary of travelling and strayed away by herself into the woods where Endymion has found her. Beneath the palm tree the Indian maid sat a-weeping. There was no one to ask her why she wept. She was an enamoured bride deceived by Endymion. As she sat a-weeping there was no one to ask her why she wept. She was an enamoured bride deceived by Endymion. As she sat a-weeping there came a noise of revellers. The trumpet sounded and the cymbals made a merry din. The Indian maid forgot sorrow and joined their dissolute company. Bacchus was playing with his ivy-twined staff. He was in a dancing mood. Little rills of wine moistened his lump white arms. His shoulders were as white as Venus' teeth, Silenus rode on his ass tipsily quaffing. The Indian maid asked the merry damsels in the company of Bacchus why they had left their home and hearth. They replied that they had left homely joys for the sake of of young Bacchus, and invited the Indian maid to join them.

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The Indian maid put the same question to the jolly Satyrs. They replied that they had left their forest haunts for wine they followed Bacchus, the god of breathless cups and chirping mirth. The Indian maid has joined the company of Bacchus and his band. They are now going over wide streams and mountains. They are riding on the backs of the tiger, the leopard, the Asian elephants, the striped zebras, the sleek Arabians' princes, the webfooted alligators and the crocodiles.

Mounting on the backs of panthers and lions the procession moves disorderly. Sitting on the back of angry unicorn they hunt with spear and horn. Bacchus and his battalion conquered many countries. Egypt knelt before Bacchus. Abyssinia began to ring cymbals. Even the fierce Tartary took to drinking. The king of India gave away their precious jewels as a mark of homage. Great Brahma moaned. The Indian maid got weary of travelling and she strayed away into the forest, sick-hearted.

In the closing stanzas she tells Endymion that she has given up her vain search for pleasure, and recognises that for her Sorrow is the only fit comrade. The Indian maid wandered for pleasure ; but pleasure is not for her. She, therefore, invites Sorrow. Sorrow is sweet. She will nurse Sorrow like her own babe.

The Fusion of the Romantic and Classical Elements

The poem is replete with Greek mythology. We find here Bacchus and Silenus riding on horse and jolly Satyrs. Though the poem contains numerous references from the Greek mythology, but in spirit it is a romantic poem. The picture of the Indian maid weeping beneath some palm-tree for her shadowy lover, the descriptions of the far off lands of Egypt, Abyssinia and Tartary, and the dense jungles and the wandering beasts—all this is romantic. The following lines have caught the very spirit of romance :

Or on a moonless night,
To tinge on syren shores, the salt sea-spry ?

Grierson has selected the following stanza for the praise of Keats's descriptive power :

And, as I sat over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers...

The poem is also rich in sensuous appeal :

His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite.

The poem is rich in colour. See for example the 'Vermil lips,' 'the white rose bushes,' 'the glow-worm light', 'moonless night', 'shoulders, enough white.' The poem is also remarkable for its pictorial quality. Words and phrases such as "falcon eye." "God of breathless cups and chirping mirth", "moving vintage."

Other Art Features

The poem is remarkable for its lyrical beauty. It wears the influences of Milton's *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* in the

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description of gods and of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in the descriptions of processions. According to A. R. Weekes, "It is hard to believe that Keats, knowing his Shakespeare well, could have written of Bacchus without recalling this wonderful verse, in spirit so close akin to his own description, of the god."

The poem is remarkable for its lyrical charms, its music and emotional intensity. A mood of tender irony and pathos like that of the best Elizabethan songs is found in the poem. The poem is a 'roundelay'—a form in which the end resembles the opening. The opening measures of the poem are repeated at the close. It ends as it began with an exquisite strain of love lorn pathos :

Come then, Sorrow ;
Sweetest Sorrow !
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast,
I thought to leave thee,
And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

"The metrical harmonies of the ode are rich and varied, the central passage being specially fine. Thee are reminiscences of both Milton and Coleridge, but the chief debt is really to a picture—the Bacchus and Ariadne of Titian in the National Gallery, a glowing scene, full of colour and strong sunshine and, crowded with figures in action. There are some other reminiscences in the poem." (A. R. Weekes). The poem has haunting music. Herford finds in this poem the dreaminess, the intensity and the lyric concentration. It has a vigorous morning freshness about it which we shall hardly find again.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

Stanza 1.

2. **Borrow :** Take away.

3. **The natural hue of health :** The natural glow of sound health. **Vermeil :** Rosy lips.

4-5. **To give maiden blushes...rose bushes :** Sorrow gives maiden blushes to the white rose bushes. The rhyming seems to be forced.

6. **Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips :** It is thy dewy hand that paints the rosy tips on daisy-petals.

Stanza 2.

9. **Lustrous passion :** The passion of a lover is always hot and lustrous. 'Lustrous' is Keats's favourite word. **Falcon eye :** The original read "lover's eye" which makes the sense clear ; the lovers's eyes were bright.

12. **To ting :** Colour. **Syren shorese :** Sea-shores. The syrens were the sea-nymphs.

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Stanza 3.

15. **Mellow deities :** Sad songs. **A mournful tongue :** A mournful person.

16. **At evening pale :** Pale evening is in harmony with sorrow.

18. **Listen the cold dews among :** Listen to the songs of the nightingale in the evening when the cold dew drops begin to fall upon the grass.

Stanza 4.

21. **Heart's lightness :** Light-heartedness or frivolity. **Merriment of May :** The joys of the spring season ; May is the month of love-making in England.

22-23. **A lover would not tread A cowslip on the nead :** A reproach to Sorrow. Lovers do not deserve to be so harshly treated and robbed of their gaiety, for no true lover would injure any of the flowers that are symbolic of sorrow. 22. **Cowslip on the head :** Though he should dance from eve till peep of day.

25-26. Critics have found reminiscences of Milton's *Comus* (line 898) in these lines.

25. **Developing Flower :** Harmonises with the Sorrow.

Stanza 5.

29. **Bade good morrow :** Bade good bye.

34. **Deceive her far away behind :** Though of leaving Sorrow far behind in the past and to lead a life of pleasure.

Stanza 6.

37. **By river side :** The Ganges.

41. **Brimming the water-lily cups with tears :** She was weeping so bitterly that cups of water-lily could be filled up with her tears.

Stanza 7.

44. **What enamour'd bride :** An allusion to the tales common in classical mythology of fair woman who were wooed by gods in disguise and forsaken, or were distressed by mysterious absence of their lovers.

45. **Cheated by shadowy wooer :** Deceived by some god or unknown lover. **From the clouds :** From some distant land.

46. **Shrouds :** Conceals herself. Being disappointed in love-affair the Indian maid hides herself (shrouds) under the dark-palm tree.

Stanza 8.

49. **Revellers :** Bacchus and his company. **Purple hue :** Purple colour rendered by the crushing of the grapes.

51. **Silver thrills :** Sparkling notes. **Kissing cymbals :** Kissing in the sense of meeting. It is the meeting of the cymbals that produces

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music ; the pair of cymbals were clashed together. **Merry din :** Noise of music soothing the senses.

54. **Bacchus :** A mythological figure.

55. **Like to a moving vintage :** A moving garden of vine.

56. **Crown'd :** Wearing. **All on a flame :** Flushed because they were heavily drunk. **Scare :** To drive away ; to say good-bye to.

60. **Berried holly...moon :** As winter is forgotten in summer.

63. **I rush'd into the folly :** Though the Indian maid joined the company of the disolute Bacchus and his merry company and forgot sorrow, she realised that she had committed a folly. Sorrow was her sole companion.

Stanza 9

64. **Car :** Chariot.

65. **Trifling has ivy dart :** Tossing a branch of ivy creeper.

67. **And little rills of crimson wine...arms :** The face of Bacchus was flushed because of heavy drinks ; little rills of wine were overflowing his mouth and moistening his fleshy white arms.

68. **And shoulders, enough white...bite :** These lines have sensuous appeal. His shoulders were "as white as Venus' teeth. His shoulders were so white that they could tempt even goddess Venus to kiss or bite them.

70. **Silenus :** A demi-god, usually represented as "a fat jolly old man, riding on an ass, crowned with flowers, and always intoxicated." He was the foster-father of Bacchus drawn Greek mythology from Lempriere's Dictionary.

71. **Pelted with flowers :** Crowned with flowers.

72. **Tipsily quaffing :** Drinking heavily.

Stanza 10.

Glee : Pleasure. **Bowers desolate :** Their bowers are desolate because they have left them. **Your lutes, and gentler fate :** Pleasant and easy life at home.

79. **Good or ill betide :** The merry damsels are prepared to dance in the company of pleasure-seeking dissolute Bacchus in every circumstances. They have lost all sense of proportion and propriety.

82. **Minstrelsy :** Playing on some musical instrument.

Stanza 11.

86. **Cleft :** Hollow.

88. **Brooms :** Grows on dry soils and bears yellow flowers.

89. **Mushrooms :** A kind of edible fungus that grows very quickly in moist lands.

91. **Breathless cups :** Cups of wine which of tosses off at a draught without taking breath. **Chriping :** Merry, cheering.

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Stanza 12.

95. **Ivy tent** : Sometimes they pitched the tent of ivy-creepers to take rest.

96. **Pants** : Breathes fast. **Asian elephants** : Keats makes the rout of Bacchus ride upon all the strange beast of distant lands.

98. **Myriads** : Countless.

99. **Arabian prance** : "The prancing of the Arabian horses, a breed famous for their speed and spirit. **Sleek** : Slim. **Web-footed** : Feet spread like a net.

101. **Scalphy backs** : The back of a crocodile is full of scales. A scale is one of the thin over-lapping plates protecting the skin of fishes, reptiles, etc. **Files** : Rows.

102. **Plumb** : Healthy. **Infant laughers** : Young children laughing ; mimicking ; copying. **Coil** : Noisy, bustle.

104. **Toying oars** : Oars meant for children. **Glide** : Sails smoothly.

Stanza 13.

107. **From rear to van** : The procession keeps no fixed order. **Scour about** : Move about in search of game.

108. **A three days' journey in a moment done** : They ride on the wild animals who run very fast. Naturally they move very fast. But three days' journey in a moment done is exaggeration.

109. **At the rising of the sun** : In the morning.

111. **Spleenful** : angry. **Unicorn** : A fabulous animal like a horse having a born on its forehead.

Stanza 14.

112. **Osirian Egypt** : Osiris was a fabulous king of the Egyptians, afterwards defied, and adopted into Greek mythology under the name of Bacchus.

114. **Parch'd Abyssinia** : Parched because Abyssinia is a hot desert.

116. **Wheming vintage** : Intoxicating and overwhelming wine. **Hotly pierced** : Influenced greatly.

117. **Old Tartary the fierce** : The ancient inhabitant of Tartary were known to be very ferocious. That is why the idiom 'to catch a Tartar' means to come in touch with a very ferocious person. **Vail** : Lover in homage to Bacchus.

120. **Brahma** : One of the trinities of Hindus, that is, Brhama, Vishnu and Mahesh. **Great Brahma.....groans** : Even Brahma became anxious and fearful of Bacchus and began to grumble fearing he may lose his empire.

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126. **Peer :** Companion.

Stanza 15-16.

128. **Young stranger :** Endymion.

129. **Aranger :** Wanderer.

130. **Throughout every clime :** Throughout the world.

131. **Bewitched :** Charmed by some evil influence.

132. **Maiden prime :** Prime of her bubbling youth. **Nurse thee** Cherish thee.

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27

(d)

TO DIANA

[From "ENDYMION", Book IV, lines 563-611]

"Who who from Diana's feast would be away ?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left ? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity ?
Not Hesperus : lo ! upon his silver wings
He leans away for highest heaven and sings,
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !
Ah, Zephyrus ! art here, and Flora too ?
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil.
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill
Your baskets high.
With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme ;
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
All gather'd in the dewy morning : hie
Away ! fly, fly !—
Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
Aquarius ! to whom king Jove has given
Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,
Two fanlike fountains,—thine illuminings
For Diana play :
Dissolve the frozen purity of air
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare
Show cold through watery pinions, make more bright
The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night :
Haste, haste away !
Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see !
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery ;
A third is in the race ! who is the third.
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird ?
The ramping Centaur ;
The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce !
The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce
Some enemy : far forth his bow is bent

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Into the blue of heaven. He 'll be shent,
Pale unrelentor.
When he shall hear the wedding lutes a-playing—
Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying
So timidly among the stars : come hither !
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither
They all are going.
Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd.
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral :
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all
Thy tears are flowing.—
By Daphin's fright, behold Apollo !"

PARAPHRASE

Lines 1-18. The chorus asks : "who would be absent from the marriage feast of Diana, the moon goddess, the 'fair silvershafted queen for ever chaste' ? The golden bower of the day is already empty because all the constellations are on their wings to attend the marriage. No one will be absent from Diana's feast. We see that the haunts of the gods are deserted, because they are all anxious to be present. Hesperus (the name given to Venus when it appears in the evening) leaves away from the highest heavens on his silver wings, and sings merrily. Zephyrus, the west wind, and Flora, the goddess of flowers and spring, are also going to the marriage-feast. They are the drinkers of the rain and dew, and young playmates of the rose and daffodil. The chorus asks Flora to be careful and fill her basket, before entering the wedding hall, with fennel green, and balm ; and golden pines, latter-mint, and columbines, cool parsley basil sweet, and sunny thyme. He asks her to hurry up and gather in her basket every flower and leaf of every clime.

Lines 19-28. Aquarius is the cystalline (crystal clear) brother of Zodiac (belt of heaven). Jove has given him (Aquarius) two founts (two liquid pulse streams, two fanlike fountains) springing from his shoulders instead of wings. In representations of the Zodiac he is shown pouring water out of a horn. He should set playing the brightness of his watery in Diana's honour. The poet again requests Aquarius to pour down the rain (dissolve the frozen purity of the air). He asks him to show his bright and clear silvery white and bare shoulders. The sense is that the clouds gathered in the sky should burst into rain so that the goddess Diana should look bright in the clear sky.

Lines 29-39. Castor was riding the planet Lion, while Pollux was riding the constellation Bear, on their way to attend the marriage of Diana and Endymion. The hair on the Lion's neck are standing erect and Bear seems ferocious. This is because they are running very fast. Centaur is flying swift like an eagle bird. Centaur is bending

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his bow to shoot an arrow far away into the sky. Centaur rode on his hind legs, because he has the body of a horse but head breast of a human being. The wedding bells are ringing. Centaur is already late and he will feel ashamed of reaching late.

Lines 40-49. Why is Andromeda, the sweet woman, feeling shy and delaying to attend the marriage feast of Diana ? She should join the jolly group of festivity. Perseus, the son of Jupiter and Danae, had appealed to Jupiter for showing mercy to Andromeda, and thus saved her from the clutches of the sea-monster. Andromeda like Daphne will become immortal as a lover, because Perseus wept bitter for her. Daphne has been immortalised as a favourite laurel of the sun-god, who changed her into a laurel, when she ran away from him.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

This song occurs in the fourth Book of *Endymion*. It is a wedding ode sung in the marriage of Endymion and Diana. *The Hymn to Diana* is sung midway through Book IV by all the friendly gods and spirits of earth and air and sea in honour of his marriage with Diana. In the beginning Endymion himself does not hear the song, and is unaware of happiness that is in store for him, for he is still divided between earthly love for his Indian maiden and spiritual love for Diana, and does not yet know that the two are one. This seems an infidelity. In the end, Diana and the Indian maiden turn out to be the same. That is to say, ideal beauty can only be achieved by love and symptahy for the beauty in human life. Endymion at the time of marriage-song is sunk in deep unconsciousness :

> Alas, "no charm,
> Could lift Endymion head or he had
> A sky masque, a pinion'd multitude—
> And silvery was its passing ! Voices sweet warbling the white.

Thus the hymn sung by this band of spirits is a nuptial ode in honour of the approaching marriage of Endymion and Diana, and the singers are various mythological figures, including several of those who are identified with the signs of Zodiac.

Theme and Subject-matter

All the golden bowers of the day are left empty. The gods have gone to attend the marriage ceremony of Diana and Endymion. Hesperus is soaring in the highest heaven and sings. Zephyrus and Flora also are making preparation to attend the marriage. The poet asks Flora to fill her basket with flowers and various aromatic herbs to present them in the marriage function. Aquarius is here supposed to have fountain springing from his shoulders instead of wings. In representations of the Zodiac he is shown pouring water out of a horn. The poet asks Aquarius to expose his white shoulder in order to make Diana appear whiter than usual on her wedding day. Castor is riding the planet Lion while Pollux is riding the Bear, on their way to

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attend the marriage of Diana and Endymion. The Centaur arrow seems to pierce some enemy. He will be disgraced if he reaches late in the wedding. The poet asks Andromeda not to feel shy and join the happy throng of marriage. Perseus had taken mercy on her and saved her from the clutches of the sea-monster. Daphne has also immortalised as a favourite laurel of Apollo.

Treatment of Nature

Though *Endymion* as a whole gives a very fine treatment of Nature, in this hymn the following lines speak of Keat's treatment of Nature :

> Your baskets high,
> With fennel green and balm, and golden pines,
> Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
> Cool parsley, basil sweet and sunny thyme ;
> Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime.

Keats is a poet of sensations rather than of thought. Lines such as "Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare" shows his sensuousness in the poem.

Pictorial Quality

The poem contains a few beautiful images and word-pictures. For example, see the description of Hesperus :

> Not Hesperus : lo ! upon his silver wings.
> He leant away for highest heaven and sings,
> Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !

Some other phrases full of felicity in the poem are—"feathered wing", "Ye tender bibbers", "frozen purity of air", "Star-Queen's crescent' and so on. The examples of colour in the poem are 'golden bowers', 'silver wings', 'lucid fingers,' 'fennel green'; 'golden pines', 'sunny thyme', 'crystalline brother, ''white shoulders', and so on.

Conclusion.

The rhymed lines make the song more harmonious and sweet sounding. Similarly the name of various constellations and mythological and astronomical denonations add to the beauty of the entire poem. The poem exhibits the poet's knowledge of stars. At the same time these details make the poem somewhat cumbersome. There are some forced inversions in the poem ("thine illumining"). The words are stringent. The poet uses such words as "silent". The influence of Spenser and of Milton is visible throughout. Thus the early defects of his workmanship have not yet disappeared.

NOTES AND ANNOTATIONS

1. **Diana** : The moon goddess.

4. **Cynthia** : Diana was born on Mount Cynthus, in the island of Delos.

5. **Hesperus** : The name given to the plannet Venus when it appears in the evening.

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6. **Leans away from highest heaven :** Flies to the highest point of the sky.

7. **Shapping :** Pointing ; Making sudden audible bite. **Lucid :** Shining.

8. **Zephyrus :** The west wind. **Flora :** The goddess of flowers and Spring.

9. **Bibbers :** Drinkers.

13. **Pines :** Pine apples.

14. **Savory :** Latter-mint. **Basil :** Various herbs. Sweet basil was a kind of mint which was the herb loved by Keats's Isabella.

19. **Crystalline :** Crystal-clear. **Belt of Heaven :** Zodiac.

20. Cf. the following lines of Milton :

> And let some strange mysterious dream
> Wave at his wings, in airy stream
> Of lively portraiture displayed.

22. **Thine illuminings for Diana play :** A forced inversion ; the words also are strained "illumings" apparently refers to the brightness of Aquarius water wings, which he is to set playing like fountains in Diana's honour.

24. **Dissolve the frozen purity of air :** Frozen purity of air means clouds' purity because the clouds are white.

25. **Let thy white shoulders ...water pinions :** These lines have sensuous appeal. The meaning is that the rain should fall.

26-27. **Make more bright the Star-Queen's crescent :** The moon is covered by the clouds. The moon goddess can look bright only when the clouds burst into rain and sky is clear. **Star-Queen's crescent :** moon. **Castor :** Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Heda, and were renowned classical demi-gods.

2. **Speeding away swift :** Flying swiftly.

33. **Ramping :** Riding on hind legs.

34. **Lion's man's on end :** Hairs on the neck of the lion stand erect.

36. **Far forth his bow is bent into the blue of heaven :** He is bending his bow how to shoot an arrow far away into the sky.

37. **Shent :** Discomfitted, literally disgraced. The present form shend is found in Spenser.

38. **Unrelentor :** Mercilessly hostile influence.

41. **Andromeda :** The daughter of a king of Ehtiopia, who quarrelled with Neptune, and was punished by the appearance of a sea-monster which revaged his land. Andromeda, to appease the anger of Neptune, was bound to a rock by the sea-shore to be carried off by the monster, but Perseus appeared in time to save her by killing the monster, and was rewarded with the hand of Andromeda. After her death she was made a constellation by Diana. **Timidly :** Shyly.

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42. **Bright throng** : The jolly gathering in the marriage festivity of Diana.

47. **Diana's son** : Perseus was the son of Jupiter and Diana.

47. **For all** : Despite the fact.

49. **Daphne** : A chaste nymph, who was changed into a baytree by the gods to save her from the love of Apollo. It was for this reason that Apollo chose the bay laurel to be sacred to him. The chorus breaks off here, for Endymion is borne away and hears no more.

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28

HYPERION

BOOK I

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair ;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;
While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place ;
But there came one, who with a kindered hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world ;
By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height ; she would have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel,
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.
But oh ! how unlike marble was that face :
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,

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As if calamity had but begun ;
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up,
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain :
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Learning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone ;
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents ; O how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods !
'Saturn, look up !—though wherefore, poor old King ?
'I have no comfort for thee, no not one :
'I cannot say, "O wherefore sleepest thou ?"
'For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
'Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God ;
'And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
'Has from thy sceptre pass'd ; and all the air
'Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
'Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,
'Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;
'And thy sharp lightning in unpractis'd hands
'Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
'O aching time ! O moments big as years !
'All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
'And press it so upon our weary griefs
'That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
'Saturn, sleep on :—O thoughtless, why did I
'Thus, violate thy slumbrous solitude ?
'Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes ?
'Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep.'
As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;
So came these words and went ; the while in tears
She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,
Just where her falling hair might be outspread
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed
Her silver reasons four upon the night,
And still these two were postured motionless,
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern ;

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The frozen God still couchant on the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet :
Until at length old Saturn lifted up
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess ; and then spake,
As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady :
'O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,
'Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face ;
'Look up, and let me see our doom in it ;
'Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape
'Is Saturn's ; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice
'Of Saturn : tell me, if this wrinkling brow,
'Naked and bare of its great diadem,
'Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power
'To make me desolate ? whence came the strength ?
'How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,
'While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp ?
'But it is so ; and I am smother'd up,
'And buried from all godlike exercise
'Of influence benign on planets pale,
'Of admonitions to the winds and seas,
'Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
'And all those acts which Deity supreme
'Doth ease its heart of love in—I am gone
'Away from my own bosom : I have left,
'My strong identity, my real self,
'Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit
'Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search !
'Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round
'Upon all space : space starr'd, and lorn of light ;
'Space region'd with life-air ; and barren void ;
'Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell—
'Search, Thea, search ! and tell me, if thou seest
'A certain shape or shadow, making way
'With wings or chariot fierce to repossess
'A heaven he lost erewhile : it must—it must
Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.
'Yes, there must be a golden victory ;
'There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown
'Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,
'Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells ; and there shall be
'Beautiful things made new, for the surprise
'Of the sky-children ; I will give command ;
'Thea ! Thea ! Thea ! where is Saturn ?'

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This passion lifted him upon his feet,
And made his hands to struggle in the air,
His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,
His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.
He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep ;
A littla time, and then again he snatch'd
Utterance thus.—'But cannot I create ?
'Cannot I form ? Cannot I fashion forth
'Another world, another universe,
'To overbear and crumble this to naught ?
'Where is another chaos ? Where ?'—That word
Found way unto Olympus, and made quake
The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,
And in her bearing was a sort of hope,
As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

'This cheers our fallen house ! come to our friends,
'O Saturn ! come away, and give them heart ;
'I know the covert, for thence came I hither.'
Thus brief ; then with beseeching eyes she went
With backward footing through the shade a space :
He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way
Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe !
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty !—
Blazing Hyperion on his orbed fire
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up
From man to the sun's God ; yet unsecure :
For as among us mortals omens drear
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—
Not at do'gs howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,
Or the familiar visiting of one
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp ;
But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush'd angerly ! while sometimes eagle's wings

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Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place ; ann neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.
Also when he would state the spicy wreaths
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills.
Instead of sweets, his ample palate took
Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick :
And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full comletion of fair day,—
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease
With stride colossal, on from hall to hall ;
While far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions in close clusters stood,
Amaz'd and full of fear ; like anxious men.
Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upod the threshold of the west ;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies ;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to sever magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath ;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reach'd the great main cupola ;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamped his foot,
And from the basement deep to the high towers
Jarr'd his own golden region ; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd.
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb.
To this result : 'O dreams of day and night !
'O monstrous forms ! O effigies of pain !
'O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom !
'O lank-ear'd Phantoms of black-weekded pools !
'Why do I know ye ? why have I seen ye ? why

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'Is my eternal essence thus distraught
'To see and to behold these horrors new ?
'Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall ?
'Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
'This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
'This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
'These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
'Of all my lucent empire ? It is left
'Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
'The blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry,
'I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
'Even here, into my centre of repose,
'The shady visions come to domineer,
'Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp—
'Fall !—No, by Tellus and her briny robes !
'Over the fiery frontier of my realms
'I will advance a terrible right arm
'Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
'And bid old Saturn take his throne again.'—
He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth ;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out 'Hush !'
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold ;
And from the mirror'd level where he stood
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd
From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries :

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Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge
Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled—Two wings this orb
Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach :
And now, from forth the gloom their plurnes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were ;
While still the dazzling, globe maintain'd eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day being, if but for change.
He might not :—No, though a primeval God :
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide
Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night ;
And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,
Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds ;
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Coelus, from the universal space,
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.
'O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
'And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
'All unrevealed even to the powers
'Which met at thy creating ; at whose joys
'And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
'I, Coelus, wonder, how they came and whence ;
'And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,
'Distinct, and visible ; symbols divine,
'Manifestations of that beauteous life
'Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space :
'Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child !
'Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses !
'There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
'Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
'I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne !
'To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head !
'Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.
'Art thou, too, near such doom ? vague fear there is :
'For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
'Divine ye were created, and divine

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'In sad demeanour solemn, undisturb'd,
'Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled :
'Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath ;
'Actions of rage and passion : even as
'I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
'In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son !
'Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall !
'Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable,
'As thou canst move about an evident God :
'And carst oppose to each malignant hour
'Ethereal presence :—I am but a voice ;
'My life is but the life of winds and tides,
'No more than winds and tides can I avail :—
'But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van
'Of circumstance ; yea, seize the arrow's barb
'Before the tense string murmur—To the earth !
'For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
'Meantime I will keep watch on they bright sun,
'And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.'—
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceas'd ; and still he kept them wide :
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

BOOK II

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ;
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled :
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.
Coeus, and Gyges, and Briareus,

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Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyrion,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, crampt and screw'd ;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;
Far from her moon had Phoebe wandered ;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creus was one ; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iapetus another ; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead ; and because the creature could not epit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain ; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons :
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory ;
And in her wide imagination stood
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve,
Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,
Shadow'd Enceladus ; once tame and mild
As grazing or unworried in the meads ;
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, worth,

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He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Not far hence Atlas ; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds :
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight ? And she must chaunt
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease :
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fix'd eye on Saturn's face :
There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty, of grief,
Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate
Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison ; so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;
So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted,
'Titans, behold your God !' at which some groan'd ;
Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;
Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence ;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise

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Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp:
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines:
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,
No other sound succeeds; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up—'Not in my own sad breast,
'Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
'Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
'Not in the legends of the first of days,
'Studied from that old spirit-leaved book
'Which starry Uranus with finger bright
'Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves
'Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom;—
'And the which book ye know I ever kept
'For my firm-based footstool:—Ah, infirm!
'Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent
'Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,—
'At war, at peace, or inter-quarrelling
'One against one, or two, or three, or all
'Each several one against the other three
'As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods
'Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,
'Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath
'Unhinges the poor world,—not in that strife,
'Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,
'Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
'No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,
'And pore on Nature's universal scroll
'Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,
'The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,
'Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
'Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,
'O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here!
'O Titans, shall I say, "Arise!"—Ye groan:
'Shall I say "Crouch!"—Ye groan. What can I then?
'O' Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!
'What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
'How we can war, how engine our great wrath!
'O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear
'Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,
'Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face
'I see, astonied, that severe content
'Which comes of thought and musing: give us help!'

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So ended Saturn ; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.
'O ye, whom wrath consumes ! who, passion-stung,
'Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies !
'Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
'My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
'Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
'How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop :
'And in the proof much comfort will I give,
'If ye will take that comforts in its truth.
'We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
'Of thunder, or of Jove, Great Saturn, thou
'Hast sifted well the atom-universe ;
'But for this reason, that thou art the King,
'And only blind from sheer supremacy,
'One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
'Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
'And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
'So art thou not the last ; it cannot be :
'Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
'From chaos and parental darkness came
'Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
'That suelen ferment, which for wondrous ends
'Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
'And with it light, and light, engendering
'Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd
'The whole enormous matter into life.
'Upon that very hour, our parentage,
'The Heavens, and the Earth, were manifest :
'Then thou first-born, and we the giant race,
'Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
'Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain ;
'O folly ! for to bear all naked truths,
'And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
'That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
'Then Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs ;
'And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
'In form and shape compact and beautiful,
'In will, in action free, companionship,
'And thousand other signs of purer life ;
'So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
'A power more strong in beauty, born of us
'And fated to excel us, we pass
'In glory that old Darkness : nor are we

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'Thereby more conquer'd than by us the rule
'Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil
'Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,
'And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
'Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?
'Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
'Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
'To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
'We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
'Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
'But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower
'Above us in their beauty, and must reign
'In right thereof; for 'tis eternal law
'That first in beauty should be first in might:
'Yea, by that law, another race may drive
'Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
'Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
'My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
'Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
'By noble winged creatures he hath made?
'I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
'With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
'That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
'To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
'And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
'Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
'Give consolation in this woe extreme.
'Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.'

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain,
They guarded silence, when Oceanus
Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?
But so it was, none answer'd for a space,
Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;
And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,
With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,
Thus wording timidly among the fierce:
'O Father, I am here the simplest voice,
'And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,
'And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,
'There to remain for ever, as I fear:
'I would not bode of evil, if I thought
'So weak a creature could turn off the help
'Which by just right should come of mighty Gods;
'Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell
'Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,
'And know that we had parted from all hope.
'I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,
'Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land
'Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.

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'Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief ;
'Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth ;
'So that I felt a movement in my heart
'To chide, and to reproach that solitude
'With songs of misery, music of our woes ;
'And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell
'And murmur'd into it, and made melody—
'O melody on more ! for while I sang,
'And with poor skill let pass into the breeze
'The bull shell's echo, from a bowery strand
'Just opposite, an island of the sea,
'There came enchantment with the shifting wind,
'That did both brown and keep alive my ears.
'I threw my shell away upon the sand,
'And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd
'With that new blissful golden melody.
'A living death was in each gush of soundses,
'Each family of repturous hurried notes,
'That fell, one after one, yet all atonce,
'Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string :
'And then another, then another strain,
'Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,
'With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,
'To hover round my head, and make me sick
'Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,
'And I was stopping up my frantic ears,
'When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,
'A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,
'And still it cried, "Apollo ! young Apollo !
"The morning-bright Apollo ! young Apollo !"
'I fled, it follow'd me, and cried "Apollo !"
'O Father, and O Brethen, had ye felt,
'Those pains of mine ; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,
'Ye would not call this too indulged tongue
'Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard.'

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,
Doth fear to meet the sea : but sea it met,
And shudder'd : for the overwhelming voice
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath :
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm
He lean'd ; not rising, from supreme contempt.
'Or shall we listen to the over-wise.
'Or to the over-foolish, Giant-Gods ?
'Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all
'That rebel Love's whole armoury were spent,
'Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,

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'Could agonize me more than baby-words
'In midst of this dethronement horrible.
"Speak ! roar ! shout ! yell ! ye sleepy Titans all.
'Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile ?
'Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm ?
'Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,
'Thy scalding in the sea ? What, have I rous'd
'Your spleens with so few simple words as these ?
'O joy ! for now I see ye are not lost :
'O joy ! for now I see a thousand eyes
'Wide-glaring for revenge !'—As this he said.
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,
Still without intermission speaking thus :
'Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,
'And purge the ether of our enemies ;
'How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,
'And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove
'Stifling that puny essence in its tent.
'O let him feel the evil he hath done ;
'For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,
'Much pain have I for more than loss of realms :
'The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled ;
'Those days, all innocent of scathing war,
"When all the fair Existences of heaven
'Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak :—
'That was before our brows were taught to frown,
'Before our lips know else but solemn sounds
'That was before we knew the winged thing,
'Victory, might be lost, or might be won.
'And be ye mindful that Hyperion,
'Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—
'Hyperion, lo ! his radiance is here !'

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew frow his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern :
No savage, for he saw full many a God
Worth as himself. He look'd upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendour in Saturn's whose hoar locks
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with lond tormented streams !

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Motiyar Rainawari
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And all the everlasting cataracts ?
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion :—a granite peak
His bright feet touch'd and there he stay'd to view
The misery his brilliance had betray'd
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East :
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He utter'd, while his hands conteplative
He press'd together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day,
And many hid their faces from the light :
But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes
Among the brotherhood ; and at their glare,
Uprose Iapetus, and Creus too,
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode
To where he towered on his eminence.
Thrre those four shouted forth old Saturn's name,
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, "Saturn !"
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods
Gave from their hollow throats the name of 'Saturn !'

BOOK III

Thus in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazed were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse ! O leave them to their woes ;
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire :
A solitary sorrow best befits
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse ! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute ;
For lo ! 'tis for the Father of all verse.
Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue,
Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
And let the clouds of even and of morn
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills ;
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,

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Cold as a bebbling well ; let faint-lipp'd shells,
On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
Through all their labyrinths ; and let the maid
Blush keenly, as with some warm-kiss surpris'd,
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,
And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade.
Apollo is once more the golden theme !
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers ?
Together had he left his mother fair
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,
And in the morning twilight wandered forth
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,
Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale.
The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle
There was no covert, no retired cave
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.
He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
And there was purport in her looks for him,
Which he with eager guess began to read
Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said :
'How can'st thou over the unfooted sea ?
'Or hath that antique mien and robed form
'Mov'd in these vales invisible till now ?
'Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
'The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
'In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
'The rustle of those ample skirts about
'These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
'Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.
'Goddess ! I have beheld those eyes before,
'And their eternal calm, and all that face,
'Or I have dream'd'—'Yes' said the supreme shape,
'Thou hast dream'd of me ; and awaking up
'Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
'Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
'Unwearied ear of the whole universe
'Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
'Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange

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'That thou shouldst weep, so gifted ? Tell me, youth
'What sorrow thou canst feel : for I am sad
'When thus dost shed a tear : explain thy griefs
'To one who in this lonely isle hath been
'The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,
'From the young day when first thy infant hand
'Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm
'Could bend that bow heroic to all times,
'Show thy heart's secret an ancient Power
'Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones
'For prophecies of thee, and for the sake
'Of loveliness new born.'—Apollo then,
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat
Throbb'd with the syllables.—'Mnemosyne !
'Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how ;
'Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest ?
'Why should I strive to show what from thy lips
'Would come no mystery ? For me, dark, dark,
'And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes :
'I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,
'Until a melancholy numbs my limbs ;
'And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,
'Like on who once had wings.—O why should I
'Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air
'Yields to my step aspirant ? why should I
'Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet ?
'Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing :
'Are there not other regions than his isle ?
'What are the stars ? There is the sun, the sun !
'And the most patient brilliance of the moon !
'And stars by thousands ! Point me out the way
'To any one particular beauteous star,
'And I will flit into it with my lyre
'And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.
'I have heard the cloudy thunder ; Where is power ?
'Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity
'Makes this alarum in the elements,
'While I here idle listen on the shores
'In fearless yet in aching ignorance ?
'O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,
'That waileth every morn and eventide,
'Tell me why thus, I rave, about these groves !
'Mute thou remainest—mute ! yet I can read
'A wondrous lesson in thy silent face :
'Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
'Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
'Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
'Creations and destroyings, all at once

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'Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
'Add deify me, as if some blithe wine
'Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
'And so become immortal.'—Thus the God,
While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
Beneath his white soft temples, steadfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs ;
Most like the struggle at the gate of death ;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life : so young Apollo anguish'd :
His very hair, his golden tresses famed
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length
Apollo shriek'd ;—add lo ! from all his limbs
Celestial * * * *
* * * *

INTRODUCTION

Hyperion was to have consisted of four books. Keats abandoned the epic because in his own phrase, it was too 'Miltonic'. The criticism has a deep significance and extends beyond matters of style. Sometimes Keats regarded Milton as a model, at others he strove to escape from his spell. The abandonment of *Hyperion* was due to Keat's desire for a more intimate kind of poetry than Milton's for one which is less remote from actual life. But the more obvious meaning of 'Miltonic' as applied to *Hyperion* is also important, for the poem has many features, both of treatment and language, which recall *Paradise Lost*.

The Theme of Hyperion

"Though a fragment, 'Hyperion' is one of Keats's greatest poems, and though 'Miltonic' it is one of his most original". It is an epic on the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympians. The Titans, with whom Keats also ranks the Giants, were an ancient dynasty of gods, presiding over the powers of Nature and ruled by Saturn. Knowing that his power would one day be overthrown by his son, Saturn had tried to destroy all his children. But Jupiter, the youngest, and escaped, and in the fulness of time, overcame Saturn in a tremendous struggle.

Outline Story of Hyperion

The epic opens with a description of Saturn after his defeat, as he sits despairing in a lonely valley. After a dialogue between Saturn

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and Thea, the wife of Hyperion, the narrative passes on Hyperion himself, the sun-god, who alone among the Saturnians, has escaped defeat. But though still unconquered, he is disturbed by many premonitions of impending evil. Book I ends with his journey to the 'den' where his fellow-gods lie in defeat.

Book II opens with a description of the conquered deities, who are roused out of their passive gloom by the sudden appearance of Saturn. Like the followers of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, the gods begin a debate on their condition (though the time seems to call for suffering rather than deeds). The finest, as also the central speech of the poem, is made by Oceanus, who counsels philosophic resignation. The older gods, he urges, must give place to their supplanters, who surpass them in beauty,

> and must reign
> In spirit there of ; for, its the eternal law
> That first in beauty should be first in might.

The debate is interrupted by the appearnce of Hyperion : but his dejected air soon extinguishes the hope which had begun to dawn.

Book II opens in Delos, an island in the cyclades, specially associated with Apollo. The short but beautiful dialogue between Mnemosyne, mother of the Muses, and Apollo, patron of all the arts, introduces the painful struggle which transforms Apollo into a god. At this point the poem breaks off, but the remainder would obviously have shown how Hyperion was superseded by Apollo. The story was partially re-handled by Keats in another fragment, *The Fall of Hyperion*.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The Poem and its Source

The nature of this *new and ambitious poem* which was taking shape in Keats's mind is suggested in his reply to Heydon's offer to paint a scene from *Endymion*.

".....the nature of Hyperion will lead me to treat it in a more naked and Grecian manner—and the march of passion and endeavour will be undeviating.....the Apollo in Hyperion being a foreseeing god, will shape his actions like one." That the title figure and the protagonist Keats' names belong to the classical mythology indicates that his subject was to involve the war of the Titans and the Olympians gods.

On April 24, 1818, Keats wrote to John Taylor—"I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good for the world. Some do it with their society, some with their wit, some with their benevolence, there is but one way for me the road lies through application of study and thought."

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The Theme and Structure

The poem deals with the war between the Titans or earlier generations of gods, and the later Olympians who overthrew them—the specific theme being the supplanting of Hyperion—the old sungod by Apollo, the dew sungod. This was not for the first time that Keats dealt with Apollo. This God formed the subject of two of Keats's early odes—*Ode to Apollo* and *Hymn to Apollo* where he describes Apollo as ;

"God of the golden bow
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair
And of the golden fire."

"Apollo is once more the golden theme" ; the sungod symbolises within his being the functions of poet, prophet, musician, physician. Using a mythological theme, Keats begins the poem in the epic manner—in the middle of the story. The Titans like the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*, are already fallen. Hyperion alone is not yet overthrown.

Hyperion, as it now stands, is by no means the poem Keats intended it to be when he first conceived the epic idea. Being in despondency and wretchedness, while nursing his brother Tom who was fatally ill, Hyperion served as a refuge from misery and agony into ideal abstraction ; and irony, despair and death are thus woven into the texture of the poem :

'O aching time ! O moments big as years !
All as ye pass, swell out the monstrous truth".

Abstract is the word Keats always used to describe *Hyperion*, it is abstract in that the action takes place on a level for above the actualities of human life. It seems to follow no particular source, drawing on a few scattered hints in mythology of the struggle between the Titans and the Olympians. It is abstract too in its apparent remoteness from the experiences that were troubling him at the moment. But abstract though it is this epic of the Titans written at the bedside of his dying brother became to Keats his "only life", a world of its own reality.

"Deep in the Shady sadness of a vale
Far Sunken from the healthy breath of morn
.....
Sat grey haired Saturns quiet as a stone etc."

These opening lines suggest an aura of mystery and "the strange event of qualitative change." (*Auden*)

Deliberately controlled emotion characterises these lines—in fact a deliberation in art is revealed. We do not find here the fluency of Keats's earlier verse—as this was written in what Keats described as an

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artful or rather artist's humour in an idiom which follows closely *Paradise Lost*. Much of the measured verse echoes Milton's verse :

He entered but the entered full of wrath

.....

And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire—etc.

The poem is remarkable for its melancholy. The note of despair runs through *Hyperion* :

"Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not....."

Or again in Book II—

The Supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,
Of range, of fear, anxiety revenge,
Remorse, speen, hope, but most of all despair."

"The theme of sovereignty as a pattern of the universe and as related to the four elements, dominates the first part of the poem. The tragedy of Saturn's fall is that he has lost the relationship. He laments :

"O wherefore sleepest thou ?
For heaven is parted from thee and the earth

.....

Is emptied of thine hoary majesty."

The tragedy of the Titans is their inability to comprehend the nature of their position. Though beneficial rulers of the world they must yield to a race of Gods "superior in beauty and magnanimity. Even though they were symbols divine," they had failed to justify the continuance of their reign. Therefore in depicting mortal-like frailty in a crisis, they had lost sovereignty over themselves. And now they had to face and suffer reality—that they were not unchangeable and omnipotent."

"*Hyperion* is, thus, not a poem of epic conflict in the traditional sense but a poem of evolution, of lower forms being superseded by higher—the latter prevailing because of their superior beauty. The main theme of the poem is the struggle of spiritual growth itself. Hence the larger vision of Oceanus, who alone among them has wandered to eternal truth, and who now is able to envisage circumstance, all calm. He alone, except Clymene, whose glimpse of truth is only sensuous and emotional, can see the glow of superior beauty in the eyes of his success, and acknowledge the rightness of defeat."

In the Second Book of Hyperion, the Titans, like Milton's fallen angels, debate the reason for their fall, and Oceanus, the wisest,

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gives the answer which Keats seems to have intended from the beginning..."

"We fall by course of Nature's law, not force, of Thunder or of love..."

Growth is the law of life, growth and changes for the better—from chaos to order, from darkness to light. For the higher and better forms of life to appear, the lower must give way and the acceptance of this is the wisest course :

"...to bear all naked truths.

.....

That is the top of sovereignty."

Hyperion thus depicts growth in the Empyrean world. The poem has been interpreted as depicting evolutionism, which is cyclic. The year revolves, reaches its consummation and repeats this process. This is Keats's dominant pattern—also in Clymene's words in Book II—

"A living death was in each gush of sound
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,
.....of joy and grief at once."

Heaven and darth are more beautiful than chaos and darkness—The Titans therefore are not to repine and must accept with equanimity...their fallen state :

".....for it is the eternal law
That first in beauty, shall be first in might."

In the Third Book, Keats is already moving away from epic into lyric writing. The conventional epic had even before Milton's day become a part of history ; Milton owed his success to his firmness and seriousness of purpose and his dedication to the supreme task.

To Keats the idea of *Hyperion* had come while he had not yet finished with his romantic poem—Endymion, and he plunged into this arduous work oblivious yet of the difficulties by which he would be assailed. Book III focuses attention on Apollo. Mnemosyne, who alone among the Titans had maintained relations with the younger gods finds a hesitant Apollo uncertain of his course. Conversing with her he becomes conscious of his destiny and assumes his new-found godhead. At this juncture when the action reaches its peak—the poem abruptly ends, leaving the reader perplexed and confounded.

According to *Douglas Bush* "Keats is not here concerned with the source of happiness or with love (as is Endymion) but with the knowledge that is sorrow, that is wisdom. And the bright elixir that Apollo has drunk is no opiate that carries him Lethewards—away from the fever and fret of man. For Keats has attained, potentially his poetic manhood.

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Hyperion is thus avowedly subjective for it deals with Keats himself and with poetry. Obviously he failed in his desire to write a long objective poem.

In Book III Keats had shown *Hyperion—his* younger self—waiting to be overthrown in delightful misery. In the Third Book he made Apollo seek out the ordeal of his transformation. He aches with his ignorance of the universe of which he is now aware. In answer to his distress Mnemosyne appears to him—the mysterious goddes of memory—repository of all the experiences of human race. At first she gives no answer to his troubled questions but at the height of his anguish, he is able to read "a wonderous lesson" in her silent face. His knowledge enormous is wisdom born of the fullness of experience—and the awareness of all the sufferings of mankind. And as he receives this wisdom of Mnemosyne, Apollo undergoes an enormous change—which Keats describes in a revealing metaphor :

> "Soon wild commotions shook him and made flush
> All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
> Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
> Or liker still to one who should take leave
> Of pale immortal death and with a pang
> As hot as death is chill, with fierce convulse
> Die into life..."

Increasing dissatisfaction with Hyperion stopped Keats from working on it temporarily. Impatient and restless with attempting to hold on to the epic style and more so due to the influence of new ideas, Keats abandoned *Hyperion* saying : "I have given up Hyperion —there were too many Miltonic inversions in it. Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself to other sensations" (In a letter to Reynolds).

The Second Hyperion is cast in the form of a dream and was composed under the influence of Dante. The poem begins with a short prologue, then moves into the temple of Keats's vision with a verse and sober grace which he achieved here for the first time in his poetry :

> "Who alive can say
> Thou art no poet—mayst not tell the dreams ?
> Since every man whose soul is not a clod
> Hath visions and would speak, if he had loved,
> And been well nurtured in his mother tongue."

The Fall of Hyperion was Keats's last effort to integrate his faculties and impulses, to set forth his conceptions of the poet and his function in the world. The poet has his dreams like other men but he alone can secure them from oblivion. The dreamer's progress from the garden into temple corresponds to the poet's growth of delight in all the beauty of the world, to the first awareness of human

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misery the development in Keat's mind, wrought by Tom's illness, from the realms of Flora and Pan to the misery and sordidness that are an inseprable part of human existence." In the words of Allan Rodway, "Hyperion is an attempt to reconcile the ruthless aspect of Nature, with a feeling that on the whole Natural life is good and worth while. It tries to fuse therefore, truth and beauty, fact and magic."

Though a fragment, *Hyperion* is Keats's most ambitious book. However, it presents beautiful poetry, thoroughly Keatsian and is an important part of the work of the young poet who achieved so much in so little time.

CRITICS ON 'HYPERION'

1. Shelley

"If hyperion be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries."

2. Byron

The fragment "seems actually inspired by the Titans and is as sublime as Aeschylus."

3. C. H. Herford

"Milton's theology introduced a conflict of purpose into his epic which is never overcome, but it secured to the vanquished friends a cause and a triumph : they move us by this resolve as well as by their suffering. Keats's theology was the faith proper to a devotee of the principle of beauty in all things that the first in beauty shall be first in might ; but this law, recognised and proclaimed by the defeated Titans themselves, makes any enterprise like Satan's not merely unnecessary to the scheme of things but is in flagrant contradiction with it. The ruined Titans are inferior not only in nobility but in strength and spirit. The pathos of a hopelessly and finally lost cause broods from the first over the scene ; the contrast between the passionate recovery of the still mighty archangel from this fall and the slow, sad awakening of the aged Saturn, is typical. Satan's defiance is more beautiful than the sad recognition of Adam and Eve : but in Keats, it is sorrow, not hate, that is 'more beautiful than beauty's self. Hyperion, therefore, is incomplete, perhaps inevitably incomplete."

4. J. Middleton Murry

"It throbs, for all that its figures are giant and immortal, with the still sad music of humanity. Of Humanity indeed, for these divine figures are lovely and human, and their wisdom is humane."

5. Graham Hough

"Again and again does Keats carry us to the opposition of two kinds of poetry, and again and again, does he shrink back from his own conclusions. Pursuing his epic of the Revolutionary Idea, Keats

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was started into misgiving : some disquiet of the creating imagination assailed him : he felt himself brought up sharply against the need of defining, the need of clarifying his own conception. What truly this God, who thus dies into life ? And into what order of life does this dying in fact conduct him ? Hyperion the first version (of the volume of 1820) leaves the question without answer ; indeed, that it puts the question we should scarcely know except for Hyperion the second version. It even possible that in the version printed in 1820, Keats was trying to save his work out of allegory. It could not be done, and he gave up, coming back to allegory unashamed. The recoil of intention leaves the first version a fragment of statuesque beauty."

6. D. G. James

"But this, if in one sense Mnemosyne belongs more to Keats than to Saturn and Apollo, is also a strained situation, so far as Mnemosyne remains at all, if only in name, a Greek goddess. The fact was that it was Greek mythology and not "Miltonic verse" that could only be written "in an artful or rather artist's humour". Keats had an abundance of "artist's humour" as Lamia and The Eve of St. Agnes in their different ways show. He could play the Greek to perfaection, but his intentions in Hyperion were higher and better than this."

7. Kenneth Muir

"I am not suggesting that Keats's political views found direct expression in Hyperion and still less that it is an allegory of French Revolution, but it is not fanciful to suggest that the revolutionary climate of the time contributed to, if it did not suggest the subject of the poem. It is on one level a poem on progress. Keats's desire for an England in which the progress interrupted by the Tory-reactions after the revolution in France would be resumed and accelerated is reflected in the poem."

8. Douglas Bush

"But Hyperion and its complements are in important respects, entirely original Paradise Lost was likewise, though it absorbed a thousand tributaries and they are the culmination of Keats's poetic progress, the last and greatest statement of his conflicting instincts and ambition."

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

Lines 1—14. *Substance :*

The epic opens with a description of Saturn as he sits despairing in a lonely valley. He has been over-thrown by the Olympians, the younger dynasty of Gods, according to classical mythology. He is discovered in a remote, secluded valley, away from all light. Forest on forest hangs over his head, and there is not least stir of life. Even

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the stream flows voiceless. All nature seems to share the grief of the fallen Titan.

Shady sadness : darkness and gloom.

Deep : Far, in the interior.

Far sunken : For removed from ; at a distance from.

Healthy.....morn : The health giving light and air of early morning.

Fiery : Dazzling bright and hot.

Eve's one star : Venus.

Quiet as stone : Perfectly motionless.

Saturn—Saturn belonged to the older or the *Titanic* dynasty of the Greek gods. He was the son of *Tellus* (Earth) and *Uranus* or *Coelus* (Heaven). His own son Jupiter rebelled against him and in the conflict which followed Saturn was defeated. In this way was founded the younger dynasty of Greek gods, known as the *Olympians*.

Still : Motionless. **Lair :** retreat ; hiding place.

Forest or...head : He sat concealed from view in the darkness of a thick forest. The forest hung over him like a thick, dark cloud obstructing the light of the sun.

No stir of air was there : There was no breath of air at all.

Life : Movement ; blowing of the wind.

Robs not : Does not blow away.

Feathered : Light as feather.

But where...rest : An instance of the many Miltonic inversions in *Hyperion*. The poem reveals the influence of Milton at every step. The dead leaf was not blown away by the wind ; it rested where it fell.

Went voiceless by : Flowed without any noise.

Still deadened more...divinity—All Nature shares the grief of the fallen Titan. Even the stream is grief-stricken and hushes its voice.

Naids—water-nymphs according to classical mythology.

Amid her reed...her lips : as a sign of perfect silence.

Expl. **No stir of air.....closer to her lips.**

The opening lines of *Hyperion* give a vivid account of the loneliness and gloom of Saturn after his defeat by the Olympians led by his own son Juipter. He sat all alone in a remote, secluded valley, thickly shaded with trees, so that no light could enter.

There was absolutely no sound or stir of air. No wind blowed. There was not even as much wind as blows on a still summer evening. There was not wind enough even to blow away the light seed which lay on the grass. The dead leaf lay where it fell, and was not carried away by the wind Nature was sympathetic and shared the grief of the fallen God. The stream flowed noiselessly by, more quiet and noiseless because it shared the grief of the defeated Saturn. It did not

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make any murmur as it flowed. The water nymph held her finger to her lips, as a sign of perfect silence. None spoke or moved.

Lines 15-21. *Substance* :

The passage constitutes one on several descriptions which suggest a sculptural images. Saturn sat listless and motionless. There was no sceptre in his hand. His eyes were half-shut and his head was bowed down. He seemed to be listening to Earth, his mother, for some words of comfort.

Margin-sand : Sand by the river bank.

And slept there since : And had remained imprinted there eversince. The footprints had not been effaced since then.

The sodden-ground : The moist earth besides the river bank.

Nerveless...dead : Without any life or movement.

Realmless eyes : An instance of the figure of speech known as transferred epithet. It is "Saturn" who is realmless and not the "eyes". **Realmless :** Without any kingdom.

Earth, personified as *Tellus* was the mother of Saturn, according to classical mythology.

Lines 22-71. *Substance* :

A goddess (the tender spouse of gold Hyperion) came to Saturn in his lair. She was tall and majestic, so tall that even an Amazon would have looked a pigmy in comparison. She was very strong and healthy. She was also very beautiful, but at present her beautiful face was marked with sorrow, as if she anticipated further misfortunes. She put her hand on the shoulders of Saturn, and bending low whispered in his ears her own grief at his fall. She first wanted him to awake and look up. But alas ! it would be of no good, for she had brought no hopes for him. He was no longer a king : the earth, the sky, the air, and the ocean were no longer his. They had been taken away from him. The thunder and the lightning no longer obeyed him, but accepted and obeyed their new rulers. It was indeed a sad time and minutes seemed to be long as years. It was hard to believe that Saturn had fallen, but every moment that passed confirmed the sad event. The goddess then asked Saturn to sleep on, while she herself would weep at his feet. It would be of no avail for him to awake and open his sad eyes.

Could wake him from his place—Could make him rise from the place where he was lying. He seemed so sad and listless.

One : A goddess, "the tender spouse of gold Hyperion," Thea.

Kindred : Relative, as Hyperion was one of the Saturnians. Also, because she was a goddess and so of the same kind.

Thought to one...not : Saturn lost in his grief, remained unaware of her presence.

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The infant world : the newly created world ; the world yet in its infancy. The goddess belonged to one of the older race of the Titans.

Amazon : The Amazons were a race of war-like women dwelling in the Caucasus. They were tall and healthy.

Had stood...height : Would have looked short-statured in comparison with her.

Achilles : One of the Greek heroes who fought in the Trojan war. His heels were the weakest point of his body. Hence the idiom, "Achille's heels."

Ixion's wheel : Ixion, king of Thessely, insulted Juno, the wife of Jupiter. He was punished in Hell by his body being tied to an ever-revolving fiery wheel.

Memphian sphinx : Memphis was an important town in Egypt. A sphinx was a fabulous creature half-woman and half lion. The stone sphinx at Memphis was a celebrated one.

Pedestaled...court : Raised high on its pedestal in the courtyard of the palace.

Lore : Wisdom : knowledge. **When sages...love :** In ancient times when Egypt was reputed for her learning.

Expl. **She was a goddess of.....Beauty's self.** Saturn after his overthrow, lay sad and listless in a dark and secluded grove. There Thea, the tender spouse of Gold Hyperion, visited him. In this passage, the poet Keats gives an account of her physical appearance.

Thea was a goddess who belonged to one of the earliest dynasty of the Titans. She was so tall in stature that even Amazons, reputed for their great height, would have looked short-statured in comparison with her. She was also very strong and powerful. She was so strong that she would have bent the back of Achilles, the noted Greek hero, by catching hold of him by the hair. Her face was as large as that of the stone sphinx which was kept in the court of the king's palace in those ancient times when Egypt was reputed for its learning and wisdom. Though her face was broad, as that of the sphinx, it was not lifeless like marble. It was a living and expressive face, shining and bright with the warmth of life. Her face expressed her feelings. At the moment it expressed her sorrow. Its beauty was so great, that even sorrow itself was beautified by it. On her face sorrow looked more beautiful than the beauty itself of other faces.

The passage is over-loaded with classical allusions and references.

She was alistening...her regard : She seemed to be listening carefully, as if she feared further trouble. Her 'regard' *i.e.* her careful listening, was an indication of her fear.

As if...begun : As if what they had already suffered was merely a beginning of their misfortunes.

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Van ward : First : forward.

Had spent their malice : had burst on their heads, with their rain of misfortunes.

The sullen rear : the dark, threatening clouds that followed behind.

Stored thunder : Full of misfortunes. **Labouring up** : raising its ugly head.

As if the van ward...labouring up : It seemed as if their misfortunes had just begun. Only the first clouds had burst upon their heads with their rain of misfortune. Others followed behind, full of the thunder of misfortune for them.

The use of such epic-similes is one of the characteristic Miltonic features of *Hyperion*.

In solemn tenour : In a serious vein.

Deep organ tone : Clear, resounding voice.

Some mourning word : Few words of grief.

Which in our.....accents : Which, translated in the weak human language, would mean as follows.

Frail : Feeble ; unexpressive.

To that : compared to that. **Large utterance** : the expressive and forceful language of the Gods.

O how.....Gods : "How feeble (is our language) compared to the mighty speech of the early goods !"

Though wherefore : But why should you look up ?

Parted from thee : Taken away from you.

Has from the sceptre passed : You no longer rule over it.

Is emptied of the hoary majesty : No longer shows any signs of your power and majesty.

Reluctant : Reluctantly ; unwillingly.

Thy thunder.....fallen house : The thunderbolts, now being controlled by Jupiter, are unwilling to be employed against their former master (Saturn).

Thy sharp.....fallen house : lightning is here said to be in unpractised hands, for the victorious Jupiter does not know its right use. But it is already being used against us, creating havoc in the domains over which we once ruled so calmly.

Unpractised : Impetuous (used in the original Latin or Miltonic sense).

Aching times : Times of sorrow and suffering.

Moments big as years : Grief makes minutes look as long as they were years.

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All as ye.....breathe : "As each moment passes, it makes the wretched truth (the truth of our fall) more evident and forces it upon our grief-stricken minds, so that it is impossible for us to disbelieve".

Thy slumbrous solitude : Your sleep in this secluded grove.
Ope : Open.

Lines 73-134. *Substance :*

The words of Thea passed away like a solitary gust of wind on a calm summer night. Saturn remained sitting motionless with the goddess weeping at his feet. They were motionless like a pair of statues. At last Saturn lifted up his sad face and looked around. He was shaking with grief. He asked her in great grief if she could recognise him in his sorrow, if she knew his wrinkled face, without a crown, to be that of the great Saturn. He further asked her who it was that had the power to take away his kingdom from him. How did he get strength enough to defeat him, the immortal Saturn, the most powerful of the gods ? Now he was over-thrown, and did no longer exercise his god-like functions. He no longer influenced the growth of crops and the spread of arts. He had lost his real self somewhere in the great open spaces between the earth and the sky. He asked her to search all space between heaven and hell, and see if some one was flying high in his fierce chariot to regain his lost kingdom. If she observed any such shape, then that must be Saturn, who wanted to be the king once again, Yes, he must be the king and again exercise his powers to create and destroy. At this point Saturn broke down with excess of grief : "Thea ! Thea ! where is Saturn".

Tranced : Calm, when all nature seems to be asleep.

Those green robed.....tall oaks : Tall oaks which tower high over other trees like senators over the common run of mankind.

As when, upon a tranced summer night.....but one wave : A beautiful picture of the grandeur of tall oak trees on a calm summer night. But it is not in the Greek spirit this attempt to depict by such a collection of metaphors and adjectives the exact effect, which is made upon the artistic mind by a forest seen under the sky of midnight the manner in which the oaks rise over other trees and assume leadership, their leaves unseen in the gloom, and the weird sense that life is suspended by charms and enchantments in the air which can only be felt by a paychic, and not by a physical, sense."

Branch-charmed : "With their branches charmed into stillness", as if by a magic spell cast over them by the stars. **Earnest**—The use of such exquisite epithets shows Keats' genius for myth-making.

As if the ebbing.....wave : The gust of wind is here likened to a sea-wave which comes and goes away, without disturbing the peace of the night.

Natural.....cavern : "Keats is probably thinking of Fingal's Cave in the Isle of Staffa, which he elsewhere called a cathedral of the sea."

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Postured motionless : Lay there without any movement like figures carved in stone ; they were motionless figures of Saturn, and his companions, motionless like frozen water.

Couchant : Reclining.

Horrid : "Standing on end"—the Latin meaning of the word, now to stand on end with fright.

Palsied tongue : His tongue trembled as he spoke, as if he were suffering from Palsy. **Palsy**—a disease in which the entire body of the sufferer shakes constantly.

Aspen malady : "Sickness which made him tremble like an aspen leaf."

Gold Hyperion : Reference to golden sunrise and golden sunset. Thea was the wife of Hyperion.

I feel thee...face : I recognise you by your voice even before I have seen your face.

Let me see..... ..it : Let me see my sad fate reflected in the sorrow of thy face.

Naked and bare.....diadem : Without its great crown, the sign and symbol of his power and authority.

Peers like the front of Saturn : Looks like the face of Saturn.

To make me desolate : To ruin me.

To such bursting forth : To such an excess ; how could our enemies grow so powerful and overthrow us.

While Fate seem'd...nervous grasp : While it seemed as if my strong hands could crush Fate itsef. "Nervous" is used in the sense of "strong" or "vigorous" as in "nervous style."

Smothered up : Suppressed ; put down.

And buried from all.....of love in : A description of the power, influence and function of Saturn in the Golden age or the age of Saturn. The Romans believed that Saturn guided the peple in agriculture, in the liberal arts and other activities, and so promoted social advancement. Poets spoke of his time as, "The Golden Age." But the old regime had served its purpose and fresh strength was needed ; so he was overthrown and his work was carried on with a more advanced outlook by the younger generation of gods.

Buried from : Prevented from.

God-like exercise.....planets pale : The exercise of my beneficient influence on the suffering world.

Admonitions : Keeping in check ; control over.

Peaceful sway..... harvesting : Restraining the wind and rain so that the crops may ripen undisturbed.

All these acts..... of love in ; All those actions through which the great God expresses his love for his creation.

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I am gone away.....bosom : I have lost all the power and authority that I enjoyed previously. I am no longer my own real self.

My strong identity : My powerful personality.

I am gone.....real self : Saturn suffers from a sense of inner weakness, and that is the real tragedy.

Spot : Bit a small piece of.

Eterne : Eternal, because she is a Goddess.

Sphere them round : Look with them around.

Starred : Full of stars. **Lorn of light**—dark, without any stars.

Regioned with lief-air : Full of life-giving air.

Barren void : Without any air or life ; dark empty spaces.

Yawn of Hell : The vast spaces of hell.

Open thy eyes.....yawn of hell : The passage has an epicgrandeur and dignity. The repetition of the word 'space' has the grandiloquent epic-effect.

Be of ripe progress : Must go on satisfactorily : his efforts must be crowned with success.

Hymns of festival : Merry-making and festivity.

Metropolitan : Belonging to the chief city.

Strings in hollow shells : "The original form of a lyre consisted of a large shell with strings stretched across the concave surface."

Beautiful things made new : New objects of beauty shall be created.

Sky-children : Titans, children of Uranus (the sky).

Thea ! Thea !.....Saturn : The words express the poignant grief of Saturn. They are a lyrical cry of the soul.

Lines 135-157. *Substance :*

After his poignant outburst of grief Saturn stood up. He remained silent for a moment. Then he asked if there was no other chaos out of which he may fashion new worlds and destroy the present one. His words echoed through space and reached Mt. Olympus, where the rebel gods trembled to hear him. However, Thea was much encouraged and she asked Saturn to follow her to the cavern where their friends were at the time.

The passion lifted.....feet : Saturn stood up out of the very excess of his grief.

Made his.....the air : He waved his hands in the air.

Druid locks : The Druids were old priests in early Britain, depicted as elderly and with flowing grey hair. Hence grey hair.

Ooze with sweat : Sweat was dripping from his hair, so intense was his grief.

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To fever out : To bulge out as if in fever.

Snatched utterance : Spoke.

Chaos : The formless and shapeless elements out of which God created cosmos. It was the state of disorder before Creation. Milton speaks of, "the realm of Chaos and old Night." !

Olympus : Mount Olympus, the abode of the younger dynasty of gods, the rebels against Saturn.

Made quake : Tremble with fear.

The rebel three : Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, the gods of the Sky, the Sea, and Hell, who had deposed Saturn.

House : Dynasty. **Covert :** Cave ; their lair.

Backward footing : Walking backwards out of respect for Saturn.

Like the...nest : The boughs yielded like mist, and Saturn and Thea are like eagles before whom boughs gave way as mist gives way when eagles upmount.

Lines 158-212. *Substance* :

While Saturn was going with Thea to the retreat of the Titans, the Titans, themselves, were in great grief. They yearned for the rule of Saturn, and wanted once again to hear his voice. Only one of the Titans, the great Hyperion, had not yet fallen. He still ruled his "orbed fire." But even he was troubled with numerous omens foretelling his fall. His palace of bright gold was blood-red, sometimes huge eagle's wings darkened the palace and at other times neighing of horses was heard. The sweet incense coming up from the earth tasted like poisonous brass or rusted metal. And so Hyperion could not rest even when the day was over. He paced about from court to court of his palace, while all his attendants were full of wonder and fear. At last he came out of his palace upto the very threshold of the west. There was perfect silence except for the sweet music of the zephyrs playing upon their musical instruments. The gates of the Palace remained open for the god to enter in, and through the open gates one could see the majesty and splendour of the palace.

In other realms.....shed : Grief was also expressed in other parts of the universe.

Such like woe : Misery as poignant as that of Saturn.

Too huge.....scribe : Grief too excessive for human tongue to express or for human pen to write. **Scribe :** Write.

Prison-bound : Voluntary prisoner within narrow limits.

Old allegiance : The rule of Saturn.

Mammoth-brood : The huge Titans.

Hyperion : The sun-god who alone among the Titans had not yet fallen.

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Orbed-fire : The sun.

Still snuffed.....from man : He was still worshipped by man who made offerings to him of sweet incense, which reached him and which he inhaled with pleasure.

Unsecure : Unsafe.

Omens drear : Ill omens.

Dog's.....screech : The howling of dogs and the screeching of owls were supposed to foretell disaster. **Gloom bird :** The owl.

Screech : Hooting.

Familiar visiting : A visit from the spirit of a dead one, just on the first stroke of the death bell that is wrung as the person dies. Such a visit would be an ill-omen. **First toll :** first stroke.

Prophesying.....lamp : "Omens were read into the way in which a wick burnt down."

Portion'd : "Proportioned", *i. e.*, the horrors were as much greater than ordinary horrors, as the nerves of Hyperion were stronger than human nerves.

Bastioned.....gold : There were huge bulwarks of gold round the palace. These bulwarks or fortifications were as huge as the pyramids.

Aurarian : Belonging to Aurora, the goddess of dawn.

Obelisks : Pointed pillars, like pyramids.

Bronzed : Brown in colour, like copper.

Glared : Shone ; dazzled.

Flushed angerly : The clouds round the palace were red as if with anger. They did not have their usual colour.

The spicy wreaths of incense :—The sweet incense rising up from the earth in curls. A fine example of Keats's sensuousness.

Savour : Taste.

Came slope upon.....to enter in : "One of the most characteristically Miltonic passages in the poem, both in the use of words (**slope, inlet**) and in construction (**as was wont, save what gave of**)" (*Selincourt*).

Slope is used in the Miltonic sense of 'obliquely', while 'tubes' means wind instruments, fancifully supposed to be blown by the Zephyrs, personifying the gentle west winds, and, therefore ; producing sweet music."

Upon the threshold of the west : Upto the very edge of the western sky.

As was wont : As usual.

Ope : Open.

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Vermeil tint and shape : Pink in colour like a rose, and also beautiful like it.

Inlet : Door.

Sever magnificance : The terrible majesty of the palace of Hyperion.

Stood full blown : Was thrown wide open.

Expl. **Even now, while saturn.....God to enter in.**

It was the time of sunset, but Hyperion could not rest. A number of vague premonitions of approaching fall troubled him and prevented his rest. He paced this way and that way in his Palace to the great terror and wonder of his attendants.

It was at this very time that Saturn having been wakened from his death-like sleep by Thea was going with her to the retreat of their friends. Hyperion came out of his palace to the very edge of the western sky. There was perfect silence. There was no noise except that of the sweet music being played upon by Zephyrs on their musical instruments. The palace gates were thrown open, and they remained open so that the god may enter in whenever he liked. This was the usual,custom. The door was pink like a rose, and equally beautiful. It was sweet smelling like the rose, and to look at it was cool and soothing to the eyes. Through this door one could have a glimpse of the grandeur and majesty of the palace itself.

The passage is a fine example of epic dignity and eloquence. Keats' imagination is here soaring high. The passage is also remarkable fot its sensuousness.

Lines 213-250. *Substance :*

Hyperion returned to his palace in great anger. He walked from roof to roof, from corridor to corridor, and from one vault to another, till he reached the central dome. There he stamped his feet so forcefully that his high palace was shaken from top to bottom. Despite his best efforts to repress his feelings, his grief and anger found expression in words. He expressed his grief at the fact that he was constantly haunted by ill-omens. Did it mean that he too will fall like Saturn ? Did it mean that even his palace, his sweet place of rest, would be taken away from him ? No, he will never allow such a doom to overtake him. He will move his terrible right arm, and its very movement will frighten away the rebel Jove. He will then ask Saturn to resume his throne.

His flaming robes.....heels : His red dress was flying about.

Scared away : His roar frightened away.

Ethereal : Airy ; unsubstantial.

Hours : The daughters of Jupiter. Their "dove wings" seems to be Keats's invention, since they are generally represented as wingless. They ruled the seasons.

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On he flared : He moved on in great anger.

From stately nave to nave : From one splendid roofed part to another.

Bowers : Shady retreats. **Enwreathed light :** With soft delicate light passing through them.

Arcades : Enclosed corridors.

Cupola : Pear-shaped, central dome.

The standing fierce beneath : Standing angrily beneath.

And from basement.....region : His palace shook from top to bottom.

There upon : Caused by the stamping of his feet.

Despite of god-like curb : "Inspite of his divine attempt to repress his feelings."

To this result : As follows.

Dream of days and night : The ill-omens, "horrors portion'd to a giant nerve", which had appeared to foretell his ruin.

Monstrous forms : Unnatural shapes which seemed to foretell his fall.

Effigies of Pain : Visions of pain.

Spectres.....gloom : Horrible visions such as appear in the darkness of cold winter nights.

O lank-eard Phantoms.....pools : 'A dreary image conveying gloom and horror". Weeds growing in pools are compared to the long ears of dreadful spectres or ghosts. **Lankeared :** having long ears. **Phantom :** Spectres or ghosts.

Eternal essence : The soul of a god ; immortal soul.

Distraught : Disturbed ; baffled.

Heaven of my rest : My palace, the place of my rest.

Cradle : Birth-place ; the home of,

Soft clime : Pleasant atmosphere.

Crystalline Pavilions : These bright rooms of mine.

Fane : Temple. **Lucent :** Bright, glorious.

It is left.....of mine : Hyperion already imagines that he has been dethroned, and his deserted palace is no longer occupied by him. Such fancies are an indication of anguish within his soul. He is already despairing and so his fall is near. He sees death and darkness around him.

Into my centre.....dominner : Even his Palace itself is now over-whelmed by dark omens of his approaching fall.

Tellus and her briny robes : The earth and the sea which surrounds it.

Over the fiery.....realms : The eastern and western sky, burning red like fire, are the frontiers of the sun-god's empire.

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Infant thunderer, rebel Jove : Jove or Zeus had driven his father Saturn from the throne by hurling thunderbolts. "Infant thunderer", because Jupiter had only recently got control of thunder after the fall of Saturn.

Lines 251-304. *Substance* :

The angry god Hyperion wanted to utter even a fiercer threat. But the threat did not come out of his throat. For, at the moment, he saw even more horrible shapes which struck terror into his heart. His whole body was convulsed with fear. It was with great difficulty that he shook off his fear. Then he repaired to the eastern gates of his palace, full six hours before the due time of dawn. The sun at that time was covered with dark clouds, but still it darted forth rays of light from the lowest point of the heaven to the highest. This orb had two silver wings, which according to their custom, were spread wide at the approach of the god. They waited for the command of Hyperion and the god himself wanted to order them to go out and begin the day. But even though he was a god, he could not go against the laws of nature and order the day to begin before its time. He had to wait, his proud spirit had to bend before the laws of Nature. He, therefore, lay down on a rack of dark clouds just at the boundary which separates day from night. He waited for the proper time of day-down in great grief.

A heavier threat.....but came not forth : He tried hard to utter a fiercer threat, but he faild to do so.

Hubbub : Noise.

Call out 'Hush' : Ask the audience to keep quiet.

For.....Hush : Perhaps the only passage in the poem where Keats falls below epic dignity.

Phantoms pale : Horrible, ghostly shapes foretelling his fall.

Bestirred : Rose up.

A mist arose, as from a scummy march : *Cf.* the following in *Paradise Lost*, where Milton tells of Satan how.

Like a black mist low creeping, he held on,
His midnight search.

From feet.....crown : From head to feet.

The planet of fire.....of many centuries : Justly described by Matthew Arnold as the most Miltonic passage in the poem. This is noticeable in the words, the ring of the verse, the sentence and paragraph structure, the use of simile, the inversion of adjectives, and the repetition of phrase. But notice also the essentially human touch which Keats gives to the passage by his use of adjectives muffing and sweet shaped (*Selincourt*).

The planet orb of fire : The sun. It's the subject of "glowed through" and the object is "the glancing spheres" etc.

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Muffling dark : Surrounding darkness.

Sweet-shaped : Beautiful.

Colure : Any one of the two great circles supposed to intersect at right angles tn the poles of the earth.

Nadir : The lowest point in the heavens.

Zenith : The highest point.

Hieroglyphics : Pictorial writings on ancient (*Egyptian*) monuments. Keats supposes them to be the reading of heavenly phenomena by the Egyptian astrologers.

Remnants huge : Huge rocks or pieces of stones ; vast remains.

Marble swart : Black stone.

Expl. **The planet orb of fire —.....long since fled.**

In great agitation, grief and fear, Hyperion, the sun-god, threw open the eastern gates of his palace and came out of it full six hours before the time of day dawn.

At that time, the fiery orb, the sun, on which Hyperion rode the sky from east to west every day, was covered in dark clouds. But this does not mean that all its light was hidden and so it was entirely dark. On the contrary, from time to time, it would shoot forth beautiful flashes of lightning which glowed from the lowest point of sky to the highest, and brightened for the time being the other planets around and even the two great circles which are supposed to intersect at right angles in the poles of the earth. Keats supposes that the pictorial writing of ancient Egypt must have been learned by its astrologers through long and patient study of such heavenly phenomena as the sweet—shaped flashes of light which the sun gave out at the time. These pictorial writings are still to be found on old ruins or huge pieces of black stone in Egypt, but no one can now read them and understand their meaning. Their wisdom has thus been lost.

The use of such long tailed similes is one of the characteristic features of the epic style. It imparts variety and grandeur to the epic. Keats has made abundant use of such similes in his epic.

Argent : Of silver. **Exalted :** Raised high.

The sacred seasons might not be disturbed : Hyperion, though a god, could not violate the laws of sunrise and sunset, and had to wait for the appointed time before he could ask the sun to rise.

Dazzling globe : The sun. **Maintained eclipse :** Continued to be dark. **Primeval :** Ancient.

Dusk demenes : Dark dominions.

Phrenzied : Agitated.

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By hard compulsion bent : Had to bow down before the inexorable laws of Nature.

Dismal : Dark.

Rack : Stretch of moving clouds.

Lines 305-357 *Substance* :

As Hyperion lay on the stretch of dark clouds on the boundaries of day and light, Coelus or Heaven his father, looked upon him with pity. He told him of the fall of Saturn and other Titans and that they were at the time on earth, sitting there in great anguish. He advised Hyperion to go there and take some action in consultation with them. He was still a god, and so he should act bravely and try to master his circumstances. He should hurry, for all omens foretold that his fall was too near.

Hearing these words of Coelus, Hyperion plunged noiselessly into the dark.

Coelus : The Latin equivalent of Uranus, or Heaven. *The Titans* were the children of Heaven and Earth of Tellus. Keats in opposition to mythology makes Coelus pity his dethroned offspring : instead of rejoicing revengefully that they, too, have met the doom which he, Coelus, suffered at their hands.

The universal space : The space which is spread over the head of all.

Son of Mysteries : Hyperion, source of all life and art, about whom little is known.

Earth born.....engendered—*The Titans* who were the sons and daughters of Heaven and Earth.

All unrevealed : Whose nature was not known even to.

Symbols divine : The Titan gods and goddesses are the signs and symbols, manifestations of the beautiful life that is diffused through all space.

New formed : Last to be born.

Fued : Quarrel ; domestic strife.

First born : Saturn, the eldest son of Coelus.

Tumble : Thrown down.

Pale vox I : "I grew pale", on seeing the fall of my eldest born Saturn.

Vague fear there is : I vaguely fear that your fall also is near.

Sad : Solemn.

Unruffled : Passionless.

An evident god : Obviously divine, not dethroned and powerless as yet.

And can'st oppose.....presence : Can still fight misfortunes like a god.

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I am but a voice : I have become thin and unsubstantial because of old age.

But the life.....tides--as unsubstantial and futile.

Be.....circumstance : "Do thou, therefore, lead events instead of awaiting them."

Seize.....murmur : Seize the point of the arrow aimed at thee before the taut bowstring ums as the arrow is shot", *i.e.*, anticipate attack.

And of thy season.....nurse : Watch carefully over seasonal changes wraught by the sun.

Region-whiper : "Whisper from the heavenly regions".

Lifted his curved lids : Keats had first used 'opened'. The change to "lifted" suggests, "vividly weariness of the dejected god."

Pearly seas : Seas full of pearls. Keats's coining of adjectives from nouns by the use of 'ly' has been objected to by critics as uncalled for.

BOOK II

Lines 1-100. *Substance* :

Just as the moment when Hyperion took a plunge into the dark night, Saturn, guided by Thea, reached the spot where the defeated Titans sat in great grief. It was a den where no light could enter. They groaned there, but could not hear the sound of their own groaning, for waterfalls thundered by and drowned the sound of their groans. Huge rocks and crags projecting forward and meeting each other formed a fit roof over this den of woe. The fallen Titans and giants were sitting there not on their thrones but on couches of flint and rugged stones. Most of them were assembled there, though a few wandered here and there, and some had been captured by the enemy. Cocus, Gyges, Typhon, Dolor, Porphyrion, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Asia, Atlas, etc, lay there in great despair, in absolute darkness, without any communication whatsoever with each other. It was to such an assembly of despairing and grief stricken Titans that Saturn came, himself torn with grief, fear, anxiety, revenge and despair.

Note : The passage is remarkable for Keats's free handling of classical mythology. The names of the Titans and giants mentioned in the passage have all been taken from mythology, but many of the details have been changed and modified. It shall be noticed that the poet has quite often mixed up Roman and Greek names and made two entities out of one.

Slid : Plunged into.

Cybele : Wife of Saturn.

Bruised : Wounded in spirit.

Insulting light : The light which would have insulted them by exposing their grief and despair.

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Glimmer : Shine even dimly.

Pour from a constant bulk : Huge quantities of water were flowing out. **Uncertain where**—It was uncertain where.

Crag jutting.....crag : Huge projecting rocks touching each other.

Monstrous horns : Huge projections resembling a horn.

Forehead to.....held : Touched each other at the top.

And thus.....woe : "And thus in a thousand huge and ghostly shapes, made a suitable roof for this home of suffering". The description of the retreat of the Titans given above is suggested by the following in Keats' letter about his Scottish tour : "At the extremity of *Fingal's Cave* there is a small perforation into another cave at which the waters meeting and beffeting each other, there is sometimes produced a report as of cannon."

Hugest phantasies : Huge ghostly shapes. **Nest of woe :** the retreat of the wretched Titans.

Flint : A kind of hard stone.

Stubborned with iron : Hardened and made rigid owing to a mixture of iron in it.

Cocus and Gyges and Briareus : Sons of Uranus (Heaven) and Tellus (Earth) Gyges and Briareus were Giants with 100 arms and 50 heads, while Cocus was a God. But Keats has mixed up Titans and Giants and mad Titans of them all. They made war on Jupiter in support of Saturn and were destroyed.

Typhon : A monster, described sometimes as a hurricane and sometimes a fire-breathing giant.

Dolar : It is a personified abstraction of dolar (grief). There was no Titan or Giant of this name, but Keats has made him one of the Titans.

Prophyrion : One of the giants who fought on the side of Saturn against Jupiter.

Brawniest : Strongest, most muscular.

Pent...breath : "Confined in places where it was hard to breathe".

Dungeonned.....element : Imprisoned in dark dungeons.

To keep their.....clenched : They could not open their mouths and were compelled to keep them tightly closed.

And all their limbs.....and screwed : Their hands and feet were all chained. They were as helpless as a vein enclosed within a metal. They could move neither hand nor feet. Such was the torture they suffered in the captivity of their enemy Jupiter.

Without a motion.....pain : The only movement they could make was the movement of their big hearts which were throbbing with pain.

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Horribly convulsed : Their hearts palpitated violently as if they were undergoing horrible conclusions.

Sanguine : Bloody. **Gurge**—throbbing.

With sanguine.....of pulse : Their pulses throbbed violently as if they suffered from high fever and blood boiled up in their veins.

Mnemosyne : Goddess of Memory, sister of Saturn.

Was straying in the world : She was not a prisoner, but wandered about here and there in her grief.

Pheobe : The sister of Saturn is mistakenly supposed by Keats to be the Pheobe who is the moon-goddess. Keats has confused the identity of the two.

The main : The majority. **Covert drear :** sad and gloomy retreat.

Scarce images of life : Hardly did they seem to be alive.

Like a dismal cirque.....kept shroud : This fine epic simile was probably suggested by the Druid Stones near Keswick. Keats gives an account of the Stones in a letter to Thomas Keats : "We set forth about a mile and a half of the Penerith road, to see the Druid Temple. We had a fag uphill, rather too near dinner time, which was rendered void by the gratification of seeing these aged stones on a gentle rise in the midst of the moutains which at that time darkened all round." These Druid stones can still be seen at Stonehenge. They are in the form of two tall rough pillars, with another laid over them like a cross-bar. They are said to be the ruins of altars for sacrifices to the Sun. *The chancel vault* of a cathedral is that part of the building in which the choir and the officiating priest sit, but the *Chancel vault* of the Druidic circle is the sky above, and that is not seen in the darkness of of the night.

Cirque : Circle.

At shut of eve : At nightfall.

Is blinded.....night : Is not seen throughout the night because of darkness.

Each one kept shroud : Each of the Titans remained hidden in darkness and made no efforts to communicate with others.

Creus : Another son of Uranus (sky) and brother of Saturn.

Ponderous iron mace : A huge iron club like that of Lord Hanuman. **Rib**—piece.

Iapetus : A Titan, son of Uranus, and the father of Prometheus and Atlas. **Plashy**—watery, reduced to pulp ; crushed.

In his grasp.....conquering Jove : In his hand he grasped the crushed neck of a serpent. Its forked tongue was squeezed out of its throat. He had killed it because it did not spit its poison into Jove's eyes when the fight was on.

Gorge : Throat.

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Cottus : Another son of Uranus, and brother of Saturn.

Prone he lay : He lay flat on earth, in great misery.

Eyes at horrid working : He was in great pain, and his eyes rolled horribly in their sockets.

Asia : According to mythology she was the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys, married to Iapetus, and mother of Prometheus. Keats departs from mythology, gives her a new parentage—Tellus the Earth personified, and Kaf, a mythical mountain mentioned in the Arabian Nights.

Dusky face : Asia, a goddess, is identified with the continent Asia, hence dusky face.

Who cost her.....her sons : How did Keats get the idea that it is easier to bear girls than boys ? Is it science or mere poetic fancy.

Wide imaginations : Imagination which took in its sweep such distant countries as India and Egypt.

High rival fanes : Temples which vied with each other in their splendour.

Oxus : River Oxus, personified.

Hope : Hope has here been personified.

Eanceladus : Most powerful of the Giants who fought Jupiter. He is also called Typhon. But Keats has made two giants out of one.

Now tiger-passioned.....wrath : He was now as angry and fierce as a lion or a tiger ; he was terrible and ferocious like a wild beast at the time.

Even now was hurling.....second war : He imagined that he was fighting a second war with the younger gods and throwing mountains at them.

Not long delayed : The second war which was soon to come. This gives us an indication of the line *Hyperion* would have taken, had Keats continued with it.

That sacred.....beast and bird : Simply imagination of the poet. There is no justification in mythology for such a second war.

Atlas : Son of Iapetus and Asia. He took part in the Titans' war against Jupiter and was condemned as punishment to bear the world on his shoulder.

Prone : Prostrate.

Phorcus.....Gorgons : Phorcus was a sea-god. Ceto bore him three monstrous maidens, called the Gorgons, whose hair was serpents and who had wings, claws and enormous teeth. Medusa alone of the Gorgons was mortal. Her eyes were so terrible that anyone looking at her would be turned to stone.

Oceanus : He is the one Titan who yet had not joined in the war against Jupiter.

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Clymene : The same as Asia, whom, however, Keats has made into a different goddess with different parents.

Themis : Another daughter of Uranus.

Confounds : Mixes up, so that they cannot be distinguished.

When the Muse's.....flight ? "When the poet is about to sing a loftier strain, who shall delay him." The poet will now sing of loftier matters. He will now pass on to more important matters.

Chant : Sing of. **Sombre :** Dark and so fearful.

Their stature grew : They rose up upon the peak.

Their steps found ease : They stopped.

Precints : Territory ; boundaries of.

The nest of pain : The retreat of the fallen gods who were in great pain.

There she saw.....strife : The misery of his face indicated the horrible conflict within his soul.

At war with all the frailty, etc : He was trying to overcome the various emotions, mentioned in the next line, as such emotions are a sign of weakness, and the effort caused him terrible anguish.

Spleen : Melancholy ; ill-temper.

Mortal oil : Oil that made a god feel the sufferings of a mortal.

Disanointing poison : Poison which turned a god into a mortal.

Kept her still : Did not move.

The fallen tribes : The defeated gods and Titans assembled in the den below.

Lines 101-166. *Substance* :

Saturn suffered more acutely still as he neared the retreat of his fellow gods. He felt faint, and would have sunk down among them had not the sight of the brave and mighty Enceladus encouraged him. Inspired by him, he addressed the Titans in a loud voice and asked them to take heart and face their enemies bravely. He had searched his own heart and could find no reason for them to be so dejected. He had read the book of wisdom written by Uranus himself —a book which he always kept with him, and which was always his guide and mentor—and he could not find in it any justification for their present wretched plight. There were no omens, no portents, no war of the elements which might indicate their fall and justify their present gloom and despair. They were the first born of the Gods, and the rebels in comparison with them were of insignificant strength. They need not be afraid of their adversaries. Rather, they should arise and face them with courage and determination.

Having thus encouraged his brother gods and goddesses, Saturn asked Oceanus to advise him as to their future course of action. He was wise and given to deep thinking, and so he was most competent to guide their future line of action.

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The laden heart.....persecuted more : The suffering heart, suffers more acutely.

Fevered : Agitated.

Nighing to : Approaches ; comes near to.

Bruise wound : Wound ; sorrow.

Into the midst : *i.e.*, of the fellow Titans, in their retreat.

Mightiness : Indicates his great physical bulk and powers.

Jet : Black in colour.

Bleak-grown pines : Pines bleak and drear having shed their leaves in winter.

When winter.....voice : When the chilly winter winds blow.

With hushing finger : Raises his finger to his lips to demand silence and attention, that he may be heard. It was in this way that Saturn now asked the Titans to be attentive to him.

To load his tongue : To express weighty thoughts.

Utterless : That which cannot be uttered.

Grew up like an organ : Grew louder and louder still.

Spirit-leaved book : A book whose leaves were written by spirits ; *"The sky, the source of primeval wisdom"* (*Bernard Groom*).

The legends.....days : Earliest mythology ; ancient wisdom.

Shallow gloom : The darkness of their waters.

Firm-based footstool : As my pillar of strength : my stay and support in moments of crisis.

Ah ! infirm : How weak we are to despair so easily.

Inter-quarrelling : Internecine warfare between the four elements.

Each several one : Each one separately.

As fire with air.....drown both : The reference is to thunder-storms and lightning which precede rain. It is as if there is a fierce war between air and fire, till both the warring elements are drowned by rain. Keats "was a Greek", and his Greekness is best seen in his mythopoeic imagination. He is for ever making new myths. In the present passage he has created the myth of the war of the four elements.

Press them both against earth's face : The rain pushes both air and lightning towards the earth.

Where finding.....the poor world : Then cracks of thunder terrify the poor mortals. The anger of the elements seems to increase four-fold and the world seems to go out of joint. All are shaken and terrified. **Quadruple :** Four fold.

Take strange lore : Acquire wisdom, light and guidance.

Unriddle : Decipher ; read ; find out.

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Pour : Study deep and long.

Nature's universal scroll : The great wisdom-book of Nature, the source of all knowledge.

Even to swooning : Till I grow faint with the effort.

The first-born.....gods : "Saturn and his brothers and sisters were the first gods to be born. Uranus sprang from Primeval Chaos."

Palpable Gods : Gods who have a physical form, and so are visible.

Cower : Be afraid of.

Untremendous : "Not to be trembled at," used in the original Latin sense.

Engine : Direct ; put into motion.

Astonied : "Astonished."

Severe content : Philosophic calm.

Lines 167-243. *Substance* :

Saturn ended his speech and then Oceanus rose to speak in obedience to the suggestion of Saturn. He spoke in a slow murmuring voice as he was not used to making speeches, and this was his first speech. He told his brother gods that he will not fan the fire of their wrath. Rather, he will tell them the hard truth, that they fell by Nature's Law and not by the thunders of Jove, and, therefore, they must yield. Those who can endure this bitter truth should listen to him, others should shut their ears. No doubt, Saturn has read the great wisdom book of nature, but as he is a king, his feelings of supermacy blinded him to one chapter, which he, Oceanus, has read with great advantage. In it he has read the eternal truth, that change is the law of nature. Saturn was neither the first of the powers, nor he is the last. In the beginning, there was chaos and darkness, but out of of it sprang light, more beautiful than darkness. Light created out of chaos, Heaven and Earth who are the parents of Saturn and other Titans. Just as Heaven and Earth are more beautiful than darkness, so the Titans are more beautiful and glorious than their parents. So it follows logically that they themselves would be replaced by others, more perfect. Thus the younger gods who have defeated them are more beautiful, and so according to Nature's law they are also more powerful. Therefore, they should accept their fate with calm resignation and not seek to alter it.

Sophist : Wise like the Sophists, a group of Greek philosophers noted for their knowledge and wisdom.

From no Athenian watery shades : Oceanus resembles the Greek philosophers in wisdom, but unlike them, meditated not in a grove, but in, "watery shades", *i.e.*, ocean.

Cogitation : Act of thinking deeply.

Locks not oozy : His hair was dry, as he had lost his oceanic empire.

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In summers.....far foamed stand : Oceanus was not used to making speeches. So he made his maiden speech in soft murmurs learnt by him, infant like, from the waves striking the sandy shore lined with foam.

His first.....tongue : His making his first speech.

O ye, whom wrath consumes : This speech of Oceanus is easily the very heart and centre of *Hyperion.*

Hyperion : Had Keats completed the epic-fragment it is just possoble Hyperion would have yielded without struggle, according to Nature's law.

Nature's law : law of change, or what now we call evolution. *Cf.* Tennyson :

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

My voice.....ire : My speech is not intended to fan the flame of your wrath.

Perfore : Out of compulsion ; as a result of the working of Nature's law.

To stoop : To yield : to accept defeat.

Sifted well the atom-universe : Examined the structure of this universe atom by atom.

Only.....supremacy : You are so high above others, being the king, that you have missed small points obvious to lesser minds.

One avenue was shaded from thine eyes : Saturn, for all his power and knowledge, could not visualise one long path of wisdom spread befor him. This path is the law of change.

The eternal truth : *i. e.*, The law of change.

Light broil : *i. e.* Light, which sprang from the internecine conflict of darkness and chaos. **Intestine :** Internecine : internal.

Sullen ferment : Internal conflict between darkness and chaos.

For wondrous ends : With such happy results.

Was ripening in itself : Was gradually brewing as a result of the conflict between darkness and chaos.

The ripe hour : The appointed time for the birth of light.

Engendering.....producer : Begot upon its own parent.

The whole enormous matter : Chaos.

Parentage : Parents.

Were manifest : Were born.

To whom 'its pain' : "That is, for those who find truth painful."

To envisage.....sovereignty : "The true height of supremacy, the ability to look facts in the face calmly."

O folly : It is foolish not to look facts in the face.

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Envisage circumstance : To foresee facts.

Blank : Utter ; Total.

Though once chiefs : Though they once reigned supreme.

Compact : Well-formed.

In will in action free : We are free to will and act in any way we like. We are the first of the creation to enjoy this freedom.

Companionship : We can share the thoughts and feelings of each other. In this respect, too, we are the first.

And thousand.....life : We are a higher form of life in a thousand other ways.

So on our heels.....treads : Just as we are more perfect than our parents, so we are followed by others who are more perfect than we.

Pass : Surpass ; excel.

That old Darkness : That primeval darkness and chaos of the past, out of which we were engendered.

Dull : Gross.

More comely than itself : Because it is more beautiful than the gross earth which is its parent.

Chiefdom : Supremacy ; the earth is ruled by the green groves, but it cannot reject or overthrow that rule.

Wherewithal : With them i. e. with its wings.

Find its joys : Seek its pleasure where it like.

Eagles golden—feathered ; The reference is to the younger gods, more beautiful than the Titans.

In right thereof: Because of their superior beauty.

For 'tis the eternall aw.....might : In the *Ode to the Grecian Urn*, Keats tells us that Beauty is Truth ; here he asserts that Beauty is Might as well. Each order endures for the appointed time and then gives way to one which is higher. Saturn and the Titans must recognise the superior beauty and might of Jupiter and the other Olympians, and cheerfully make room for them. They must obey Nature's law of change.

Foamed along : Driven on the foam.

Scud : Fly swiftly. **Dolorous**—sad.

Woe extreme : Extreme woe (an example of inverted construction).

Lines 244-299. *Substance :*

Nobody answered Oceanus and there was complete silence for sometime. Then Clymene broke the silence with her mournful complaint. She told them of an incident which befell her a short while ago, and which made her weep and lose all hope. One day she stood upon a shore. It was a very pleasant shore, the climate was pleasant and full of sweet fragrance. There was perfect calm all around. Her heart was full of grief, and she took up a shell to pour into it all her

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misery and disturb the peace of the moment by her song of grief. But as soon as she began to sing, there came out of a grove, on an island just opposite, much sweeter music. She had never heard such sweet melody before. She was charmed. She threw away her shell and listened fascinated to the golden music, notes of which hovered round her head like fluttering doves. The music gave her joy, but it also caused her great grief because it implied the existence of some superior power. Overcome with grief, she tried to stop her ears with her fingers. But to her great surprise, even then the musical voice peneterated her ears, and cried : "*Apollo* !, *Young Apollo* !, *Morning bright Apollo* !", She fled from there, but the voice still followed her. It was the excess of her grief alone which had emboldened her to speak in that august assembly of the gods.

Pozed : Settled ; fixed.

Guarded silence ; Kept silent.

What deepest thought can tell ? Not even the profoundest thoughts can tell the reason for their silence.

Whom none regarded : For whom nobody cared.

Hectic : Feverish : flushed.

Wording : Speaking.

The Fierce : The mighty gods fierce with anger at the time.

I would not bode of evil : I would not like to tell you of any coming evil.

By just right : Rightly.

That we had parted from all hope : That no hope was left for us.

Movement : Urge.

To chide.....of our woes : I had an urge to disturb the peace of that place by my mournful song.

O melody no more : My song did not sound musical at all (in comparison with the music of that place).

The dull shell's echo : The shell is dull because it did not produce sweet melody.

Strand : Shore.

Enchantment ; Sweet music the result of magic, or music which charmed the goddess.

That did both.....my ears : The music was both a pain and a joy for her. It was a joy to listen to it, but it was also a painful reminder that there was some power superior to them in existence.

A living death...sounds : Each fresh wave of music caused the goddess intense pain. She lived, but each moment suffered the pain of death,

Rapturous : Ecstatic. **Hurried notes**—It was a music with a swift rhythm.

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Like pearl beads.....string : The students should note the beautiful image, as well as the sweet, delicate music of the line. "The line imitates the sound of beads suddenly falling from a string". (*Boardman*).

Each like a dove.....at once : Another of the striking images of Keats. In such lines Keats is really inspired. The notes of music coming to the ears of the goddess are being likened to doves hovering round the head of a person. It is an example of the almost Shakespearean felicity of expression for which *Matthew Arnold* praised Keats.

Olive perch : Its seat on an olive branch.

Make me seek.....at once : Her heart ached with excess of grief as well as joy.

Overcome : Overpowered the goddess.

Frantic : Mad with grief.

Past all hindrance.....hands : She closed her ears with her fingers but still the sound could not be prevented from entering her ears.

Indulged tongue : Tongue allowed to talk without check or restraint. **Presumptuous**—over-bold.

Lines 300-345. *Substance :*

Hardly had Clymene stopped speaking when soft, gentle voice, like the murmuring of a brook, was drowned by the angry roar of Encelandus, as over-whelming as the roar of a mighty ocean. He did not rise but continued to recline on his arm, as if in supreme contempt his audience. He asked his fellow gods neither to listen to the over-wise (*Oceanus*) nor to the over-foolish (*Clymene*). The foolish words of persons like Clymene caused him greater pain than all the thunder bolts of Jove or the burden of the world he had to carry on his shoulders. He then reminded them of the loss they had suffered and the insults that had been hurled at their heads. They had been defeated and struck by the young and inexperienced Jove. His words angered the listening gods, and he was glad to see the fierce fire of revenge in their eyes. They were aroused from their lethargy and were ready for action. He then stood up in great anger and further told them that like so many flames of fire they would scorch the air which their enemies breathed, and burn the clouds of Jove, and suffocate him in his tent. They had not only lost their realms, but what was still more painful they had lost also their calm and easy life. Those happy days were no more when they did not know what the words 'defeat' or 'victory' meant, and when all the powers of heaven—angles, etc.—attended upon them and eagerly listened to the words that fell from their lips.

Enceladus further reminded them of their brother *Hyperion* who still ruled undisgraced. At that very moment, Hyperion arrived at the scene.

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Timorous brook : A small brook, flowing slowly with a soft murmur, as if afraid to meet the sea.

Lingering : Flowing slowly, and thus delaying her meeting with the sea.

But sea it.....shuddered : The delicate voice of Clymene is being likened to the soft murmur of a gentle brook, and the loud thundering voice of Enceladus to the roar of a mighty ocean. The goddess shuddered to listen to it.

Over-whelming voice : The voice which drowned all other sounds.

Swallowed it in wrath : The loud angry voice of Enceladus drowned the soft voice of goddess, as the roar of a sea drowns the delicate murmur of a gentle brook.

Ponderous syllables ; The pompous, grandiloquent language of Enceladus.

Half-glutted : Half-filled by the incoming tide. **Hollows :** caves.

Came booming thus : He spoke in a loud thunderous voice, like the roar of a current of water rushing into mountain caves.

Over-wise : The reference is to Oceanus. **Over-folish**—Clymente.

Baby words : Words, fit for children.

Buffets vile : Wicked blows.

Youngling : A term of contempt ; the young, boyish, Jove.

Sham : Hypocrite ; false.

Scalding : To burn by immersing in hot water.

Spleen : Anger.

Without intermission : Without break ; continuously.

Purge the ether of our enemies : "Scorch the serene Olympion air enjoyed by our enemies" (*Bernard Groom*) : purify the atmosphere of their evil presence.

Puny essence : The young, boyish Jove.

Oceanus's lore : That change is the law of nature, and "first in beauty, is the first in might."

Much pain I have.....realms : I suffer not only because I have lost my realm, but because I have lost other things more dear to me.

All innocent.....war : Peaceful times when destructive wars were not known.

Existences : Powers, angles, etc.

To frown : With grief and anger.

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Else but solemn sounds : Knew everything else except sound of sorrow : when sorrow was unknown to us.

The winged thing Victory : Keats must be thinking here of the statue of Victory in Greece. Victory is represented as a goddess with wings.

His radiance : A reference to the bright light heralding the approach of Hyperion.

Lines 346-391. *Substance* :

Hyperion reached the secluded retreat of the Titans. At his approach there was light even in the remotest nooks and recesses. His splendour revealed the sad, wretched condition of the fallen gods. He stood firmly on a granite peak, as huge in bulk as the statue of king Memnon in Egypt. Mournful sighs escaped his lips. He remained standing in silence. Seeing his dejection, the other gods were also dejected. But Enceladus glared at them with his fierce eyes. At his look they were ashamed of themselves. Iapetus, Creus, and Phorcus got up and shouted Saturn's name. Hyperion shouted Saturn in return. The cry was taken up by the other Titans. But there was no joy in the face of Saturn, even though his name was being shouted by all the other gods. He sat dejected near the mother of gods (Earth, personified as Tellus).

Pallid : Not very bright ; pale.

Not savage : His looks were not fierce, because he saw that the other gods shared his anger and were ready for revenge.

Splendider in Saturn : Saturn's face was brighter than the face of other Titans.

Whose hoar locks.....cove : His white hair shone as brightly as does the foam on the keel of a ship, as she enters a dark day.

Cove : A small inlet, creek or bay.

Prow : The front part of a ship.

Keel : The rear of a ship.

Splendour : Bright, dazzling light heralding the approach of Hyperion.

Beetling : Jutting ; standing out prominently.

Oblivion : Darkness.

Voiceless, or.....streams : Mountains and valleys, gulfs and chasms, where no stream flowed, or those which echoed with streams flowing with a loud sound. **Tormented :** forcing themselves through narrow openings and thus producing a loud report.

Everlasting cataracts : Waterfalls flowing continuously without break.

Mantled : Cloaked.

Had betrayed : Had revealed,

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To the most.....itself : The most wretched, and, therefore, hateful, condition of the gods was fully revealed.

Short Numidian Curl : Short curly hair, like that of the Numidian tribe of Africa.

Regal : Royal ; majestic.

Bulk : Huge figure.

Memnon's image : "A statue near Thebes in Egypt, which was famous for emitting at sunrise a sound like the breaking of a harp string, and at sunset a mournful sound. The figure was believed to represent Memnon, an Egyptian king, who took part in the Trojan war and was slain by Achilles" (*Boardman*).

The dusking East : The East growing dark at sunset.

Contemplative : As if he were in deep thought.

Exp. **Golden his hair.....and in silence stood.**

Hyperion reached the secluded retreat of the fallen gods, and stood on a granite peak. His splendour filled with light even the remotest nooks and corners which are usually steeped in darkness. It also exposed to view the wretched condition of the Titans.

In this passage the poet compares the huge figure of Hyperion with the huge statue of king Memnon near Thebes in Egypt. The statue is vast in bulk and casts a long, dark shadow at the time of sunset. At this time it also produces a mournful sound like that of sighing. Hyperion, with his short golden hair like that of the Numidian tribe of Africa, was equally bulky. His huge figure stood on the granite peak and cast a long dark shadow like the statue of king Memnon. Everything else was bright except this huge shadow. Further, the bright god was constantly sighing, and his sighs may be compared to the mournful sound produced by the statue of the Egyptian king. The hands of the god were pressed together, as if he were in deep thought. He stood there in silence.

Note : *Memnon's harp*—The reference is to the sad sound produced by the statue of king Memnon at the time of sunset. It is, as if, he played a mournful tune on a harp.

The students should note the constant use of such epic similes which impart variety and epic-dignity to the narrative.

Sent forth.....brotherhood : Looked round angrily at the fallen fellow gods.

Their glare : The fierce angry look in his eyes.

He towered.....eminence : Stood high on the peak.

Mother of the gods : Earth, personified as Tellus.

Hollow Hoarse :

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BOOK III

Lines 1-61. *Substance :*

The poet now leaves the fallen Titans mourning their fall. He now turns to Apollo, the God of the future. He wishes that there should be rejoicing in all Nature, for simultaneously with the fall of the Titans, these was also the rise of a new god. At that very time when bright Hyperion stood on the granite peak and gazed at his miserable companions. Apollo wandered about the island of Delphos which is his birth place, and which is still sacred to him. He had left behind him his twin-sister and his mother sleeping together in their bower. He listened to the murmur of the waves and the singing of the thrush, and he wept. His bright tears flowed down the golden bow he had in his hand.

As Apollo stood weeping with his half-shut eyes, an awful goddess came to him. He asked her in surprise in his melodious voice, how she came there, for he had not heard the sound of her footsteps ? How did she cross the sea, or did she live in that very island ? He had often heard a rustling in mid-forset, was it caused by her wide skirts sweeping along the forest ? It seemed to him that he had beheld her calm eyes and face before. Had he really seen her before, or was it merely his imagination ?

Utterly s Completely.

O leave them, Muse : The poet will no longer sing of the fallen Titans, but of Apollo, the future god.

Such tumults dire : Such stormy passions as those of the dethroned gods ; excessive grief.

Antheming : Singing of "Comemorating in a song".

A solitary sorrow.....grief : The pathos of these lines arises from the fact that they were written soon after his brother Tom's death, when the memory of the sad loss was still fresh in his mind.

Bewildered shores : An instance of transferred epithet. The shores are not bewildered, but the gods, who will be wandering on those shores, are bewildered.

Touch piously the Delphic harp : O Muse, sing reverently of Apollo, **Delphic**—from Delphos, an island near Greece, sacred to Apollo. It is the birth place of Apollo.

Warble : Music ; song.

The Dorian flute : A Doric song is simple and solemn in style, hence a simple song or melody. *The Dorians* were the inhabitants of *Dora* in Greece. They were simple village people.

The Father of all verse : Apollo who is the Sun-god, as well as the god of poetry. The winds of heaven will aid the poet, because he is going to sing of Appllo who is the god of poetry.

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Flush everything.....Vermeil hue : Let everything of red colour acquire a richer and bright tinge as a sign of welcome for the new god. **Flush**—to glow ; to become more red and bright. **Vermeil**—red.

Glow intense : Acquire a richer and brighter colour ; let it burn like fire and warm the air.

Even : Evening.

Fleeces : Pieces of soft wool.

Goblet boil : Froth over in cup, like boiling water.

Faint lipped shells : Shells having pale lips.

Deeps : Oceans.

Labyrinths : Twisted body.

Let the maid.....surprised : Let the maidens blush red as they do when some one surprises them with a warm kiss. The line is an instance of Keats' voluptuousness.

Flush everything.....kiss surprised : Let all nature welcome Apollo with sensuous pleasure. The passage is a fine instance of the sensuousness of Keats.

Embowered : Full of shady trees. **Cyclades :** A group of islands situated in the Aegean Sea near Greece. In the centre is the island of 'Delos' or 'Delphos', the birthplace of Apollo. Hence it's referred to here as the chief isle.

In which the.....song : Through which the wind blows with a loud rustling sound.

The Giant of the sun : Hyperion.

Amid the.....peers : Surrounded by his grief-stricken fellow gods.

His Mother fair : Latona, the mother of Apollo. **Twin sister :** Diana or Artemis, the sister of Apollo.

Osiers : A kind of water-willow.

The nightingale had ceased : The nightingale is supposed to sing only by night. Its music ceases as soon as it is day-dawn.

Began to sing calm-throated : The thrush began to sing calmly. The coining of such compound epithets, as "*calm throated*" is a salient feature of Keats' art.

Covert : A cave ; a sheltered place.

Unhaunted.....waves : Where the soft noise made by the rise and fall of the waves may not reach.

His listened and.....he held : Leigh Hunt and some other critics have censured, says *Selincourt*, this conception of Apollo. "It strikes us that there is something too effeminate and human in the way in which Apollo receives the exaltation that his wisdom is giving him. He weeps and wonders somewhat too fondly, but his powers gather nobly on him as he proceeds". *Selincourt* does not agree with this

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criticism and says, "If the wisdom which Apollo gains were merely knowledge, the criticism would be unanswerable, but it is evident that Keats means to include in it far more than this, and to suggest that the great poet of light and song reaches his supremacy not merely by knowledge but by anguish and by a distress of heart which makes him 'feel the giant agony of the world', and gives him an understanding of human suffering. Keats had dwelt upon this idea in *Sleep and Poetry*.

Golden bow : The bow is golden, because he is the sun-god and shoots golden rays. Apollo is represented with a bow, for it was with a bow that he killed the monster Python.

Suffused eyes : Eyes full of tears.

Awful goddess : Mnemosyne, the Mother of the Muses in classical mythology.

Purport : Some important message.

The unfooted sea : The sea over which no one treads.

Antique mein : Old figure of the goddess. **Robed form :** The well-dressed goddess.

I have heard.....leaves : I have heard the rustling sound made by your dress as it brushed against the fallen leaves.

I call mid-forest : Sensuous epithets are constantly recurring in Keats.

Ample : Loose and flowing.

These grassy solitudes : An instance of Transferred epithet ; as he sat on the grass in the solitude of the forest.

I have beheld.....dreamed : I cannot say for certain whether I have actually seen before your calm eyes and face, or is it merely a dream or imagination.

The supreme shape : The awful goddess.

Lines 61-79. *Substance* :

The awful goddess told Apollo that he had certainly dreamed of her and seen her face and eyes in that dream. On awaking from his sleep he had found a golden lyre near him, on which he could play such melodius tunes that all the world wondered at their sweetness. He had such wonderful gifts, and still he wept. It was really very surprising. The goddess asked him to tell her why he wept, for his tears made her sad. She had watched over him since the time he was an infant and unknowingly plucked flowers, upto the present when he could bend the bow heroically. She had forsaken old and sacred thrones for his sake, for it had been foretold that a new and lovelier god was about to be born. Since she loved him so much, he should tell her the secrets of his heart.

A lyre all golden : Apollo is represented with a bow as well as with a golden lyre, as he is also the god of poetry.

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Unwearied ear : The ear never tired with listening to the sweet music of Apollo.

Toneful wonder : Such wonderfully sweet music.

From the young day : From the earliest days of your life.

Witless : Unknowingly.

An ancient power : An old goddess.

For prophecies of thee : Because it had been foretold that you were about to be born.

Of loveliness new born : The birth of Apollo, the new god, was also the birth of beauty.

Lines 80-120. *Substance :*

Apollo scrutinised the face of the goddess with his bright eyes, and suddenly pronounced her name. Her name '*Mnemosyne*' was on his lips, but he knew not how he came to know it. She was a goddess and knew many things which were still hidden from him. She should tell him what still a mystery for him. He had still no vision and could not understand the many strange things that had happened. He could not understand the reason of his own melancholy. He felt baffled and amazed when the air yielded to his steps, and when in his desire to ascend, he kicked aside the green turf. He requested the goddess, if there were not regions other than the earth. What were the stars, the sun and the moon over-head. He requested her to point out the way to some beautiful star and he would ascend it with his lyre, and make it throb with sweet song. He could hear the thunder in the sky, but did not know what Power controlled it. He asked the goddess to tell him why he was so sad even though he had such a beautiful island at his command. The goddess remained silent, but Apollo could know much from her silent face. He had now gained vision and knowledge, and knew that he was a god. It was, as if, he had drunk some nectar, some cheering wine, and had become immortal.

Gloomless : Bright ; shining.

Would come no mystery : as it is very well known to her.

Dark, dark : The repetition shows the deep anguish of Apollo at his ignorance.

Painful vile.....my eyes : Apollo yet has no vision and does not understand the many strange things that have happened. Everything is yet hidden in darkness.

Numbs : deadens ; makes listless.

Cursed and thwarted : Baffled and at bay.

When the leigless.....aspirant : "The air which does not owe allegiance or service to any master, but which yields to my steps when I try to rise up." **Leigless :** independent ; without any lord and master. **Aspirant :** eager to ascend.

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Why should I.....to my feet : Apollo already feels that the green turf is not for his divine feet, and so he kicks it away. He is in the process of becoming a god, though as yet he does not realise this. He is surprised and baffled at the strange things that are happening to him.

Flit into it : Fit to it.

Silvery splendour : Silvery brightness of the star.

Pant with bliss : Throb with pleasure at my sweet melody.

Makes this alarm.....elements : Cause this terrible noise in the sky and air.

In fearless.....ignorance : I am not afraid of the terrible thunder in the sky but my heart is pained at my ignorance.

That waileth : On which you produce such melancholy music.

Rave : Wander about in such grief.

Knowledge enormous.....me : It is now that Apollo gains vision and knowledge. He now understands that he is a god. "Keats himself aspired to this knowledge, which included knowledge of, "the agonies, the strife of human hearts" (*Earnshaw*).

Grey legends : Legends of ancient times.

Pour into.....my brain : Enter into his head all at once.

And deify me : And he realises that he has become a god.

Blithe wine : Wine which cheers and stimulates. **Elixir :** 'nectar' which bestows immortality.

Lines 121-136. *Substance :*

Apollo, the new god, stopped speaking. His bright eyes were fixed upon Mnemosyne, and shed light upon her. His whole body was shaken with the throes of a new life. He saw convulsed, as if with terrible anguish. During all this time Mnemosyne held up her arms, as if she were making some prophecy. Apollo shrieked, and he was thus a god.

Thus the god : Apollo ended his speech in this way.

Enkindled eyes : Bright with a divine light. **Temples :** forehead.

Wild commotion : A Terrible agitation.

Made flush.....limbs : All his white limbs glowed red with the terrible agitation he suffered from.

Most like.....of death : It was like the throes one suffers at the moment of death.

And with a pang.....die into life : The throes which convulsed Apollo were like the throes experienced by a man who is going through a struggle that will end his life, and thus free him from the fear of death, but will also result in his passing into immortality. The pangs he suffered from were as hot, as those of death are cold.

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His agony was as painful as that of death, yet different, for he was not going to die, but to become a god. He was experiencing the throes both of life and death.

Anguished : Suffered from intense pain.

Undulation : Moving up and down ; shaking.

Celestial : Keats' friend Woodhouse completed the last line with the words.

"Glory dawned, and he was a god" (*Bernard Groom*).

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UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS WITH MODEL ANSWERS

Q. 1. Write a note on Keats' sensuousness.

Or

"Keats longed for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts." Show in what way his poems are a fulfilment of this longing.

(Agra University, M.A., 1966; Rajasthan, M.A., 1968)

Ans. "Keats is pre-eminently a man of sensations, with whom the very activities of intelligence bring into play concrete notions, images and qualities. Thanks to a principle of choice which the intuition of genius furnishes him, he makes his way towards the ideal of balance which is that of perfect classicism, having started from no other principle than that of Romantic intensity. His art is full of passion ; it is above all aspiration and desire ; and the object of this desire is not the 'intellectural beauty' of Shelley, but that which reveals itself to the enchantment of the sense. It is easy to discern in his work the whole gamut of sensations, set off by a richness and a softness of colouring which reveal the complacency of a refined fondness. With nothing suggestive of animality or violence, in a spirit of pagan wisdom in which nature offers to mankind is tasted by a sensibility which finds in every drop the food for poetic thought. Pleasure becomes spiritualised into joy, and the joy becomes irradiated with beauty. Emotion has its share in this feast of the sense ; Keats is by no means the epicurean according to whom true enjoyment of life is secured only through a calm and detached reasonableness ; he himself has known the pain, the fever of passion. But this deepening of the inner resonance of the soul is hardly to be found save in his masterpieces, as in his later years ; in his early poems, love is depicted with a somewhat exterior energy, as well as a deliquescent languour." (*Cazamian*).

So Keats is a poet of sensuousness. He delights and luxuriates in all those things which please the sense. He is very much interested in sensations. By sensation is meant intuition, and Keats places intuition higher than reasoning. He lives 'for a life of sensation rather than of thoughts.' Hence he is a poet of perception rather than of contemplation and speculation. He is a passionate worshipper of beauty, and can find it even in the most common objects.

He does not philosophise over nature ; he only paints her validity imaginatively. He approached nature, art and even abstract thoughts and passions in a spirit which is best described by the term

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'sensuousness.' He rightly pointed out precepts are not 'preceptions' to us unless they are tested on our places. He was committed to the religion of beauty and observed towards the close of his life that he had loved the abstract principle of beauty in all things. But this beauty became real to him only when he could grasp, touch, smell and even taste it with his senses. This distinguishes him sharply from Shelley who followed only the glittering phantom of ideal Beauty without being able to come in contact with it.

Shelley's love poetry has touch of body and flesh because he flies at once from the beloved to the heavenly Love and transforms her with the light and splendour of his ethereal imagination till 'flesh must fail for heaven was near.' Keats on the contrary, is a master of the sensuous love ; its panting intoxication, dizzy rapture and hellish torture which leave the heart cloyed, a burning forehead and parched tongue. He describes the gods and goddesses and the great mythological figures also in similar sensuous terms. We may instance the picture of Cupid and Psyche in the famous ode :

> They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass ;
> Their arms embraced, and their pinions too,
> Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
> As if disjointed by soft-handed slumber,
> And ready still past kisses to outnumber.

In *Endymion*, he describes the hero's plump white arms and shoulders 'for Venus' in a rare manner. "An overwealthy imagination multiplies the descriptive features ; an overstrung sensibility carries each notation to the extreme and a design of seductive grace and conscious charm is expressed in a language which is often artificial, loaded with elaborate ornaments, with rare, archaic, or affected epithets."

The poetry of Keats is naturally full of vivid descriptions, pictorial richness and organic shapes of things concrete as well as of abstract ideas and passions. Each image is thrown up rounded and whole as a physical creation, with subjective interpretation leading depth. There are Miltonic solidities, but all are newly alive. The effect is statuesque and sculptural of which the best examples are to be found in the descriptions of the fallen deities in the *Hyperion* and the picture of the sleeping *Adonis* in Endymion. Then there are pictures of repose trembling on the brink of renewed energy or arising from the suspension of motion and activity.

He imagines joy as a person with his finger on his lips bidding adieu and in sheer sensuous appeal to sight, smell, touch, etc. Nothing can surpass the description of Madeline in *St. Agnes*, 'A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings' throws warm gules' and 'rose-bloom' upon her :

> On her silver cross soft amethyst,
> And on her hair a glory, like a saint ;
> She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
> Save wings, for heaven.

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The sensuousness of Keats is comprehensive in as much as it is conscious of the beauty of the real which must die or may fall on the palate and the beauty of the ideal, which is deathless and ever panting and young. Like Wordsworth he combined sensuousness with the misery of life on the one hand and with spiritual contemplation on the other.

Even the epithets of Keats are rich in sensuous quality 'water cleanness', 'delicious face', 'melodious plot', 'sun-burnt mirth', 'embalmed darkness', 'against moist.'

(Please also see General Introduction, 4 and 6)

Q. 2. Write a note on the distinctive features of Keats' nature poetry. (Agra University, M. A., 1971)

Or

Discuss Keats as a poet of Nature.

Ans. In his treatment of Nature, the manner of Keats is distinguished at once from the spiritualizing bias of Wordsworth and the ethereal touch of Shelley who was always eager to transfigure the familiar with the visionary light of his dream or to penetrate into the depth of the mystery within, benind and beyond the sensuous objects. Keats's approach is sensuous, keenly observant and remarkably empathic. "The colour, the scent, the touch, the pulsing music ; these are the things that stir him to his depth ; there is not a mood of the Earth he does not love, not a season that will not cheer and inspire him."

Wordswords and Shelley go behind the external phenomena of nature and philosphise over them. Wordsworth sees behind nature the spirit of God. Shelley sees behind it the spirit of Love and Liberty. But Keats is an ardent lover of the beauties of Nature. His appreciation of the common objects of nature is genuine and warm. But he loves what is beautiful in nature. He does not seek in it any spiritual, moral or mystical meaning. It is the sensuous beauty of Nature that appeals him most.

Keats' friend Severn has rightly said, "Nothing seemed to escape him, the song of a bird and the undertone of respones from covert or hedge, the rustle of some animal, the changing of the green and brown lights and furtive shadows, the motions of the wind...and the way-faring of the clouds : even the features and gestures of passing tramps, the colour of one woman's hair, the smile on one child's face," etc. His early poems are full of vivid pictures of the moods and objects of nature which bear witness to his sensuous alertness to the colour, beauty, form, smell and sounds lying around him.

Margaret Sherwood has commented on this aspect of Keats in this manner ; "H was immediately aware of the close interknitting of man, body, mind and soul, with the green world of which he was a part. Reading when he writes of spring, of autumn, one seems to

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be, not observing, but experiencing the quickening of spring, the ripening of autumn. The idea of oneness of all life, of organic relationship between all manifestations of life, towards which the natural philosophy of the time was groping, was with Keats a sensation, as well as an instinct, an intuition. He was one in whom there was immediate consciousness of the 'one life within us and abroad", a physical as well as an emotional and spiritual awareness."

Q. 3. Write a note on Keats' Medievalism.

Ans. Romantic Poetry of the 19th century was a return to Nature and retun to the Past. Between *Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry* and Macpherson's *Ossian*, a lot of medieval lore was unearthed. These poets began to look to medievalism as their chief source of inspiration and subject-matter. Gray interested himself in Icelandic sagas and the Teutonic legends of the North, whereas the precious genius of Chatterton directly imagined in the past and imitated the oldest poets in his *Rowley Poems*. Scott and Coleridge were caught in the stream, and the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Rockeby* faithfully reproduced an old world atmosdhere with its knights and ladies, joys, and tournaments. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* beautifully bring to our sight medieval world. Keats followed their wake in his *Isabella, Eve of St. Agnes, Lamia*, and the fragmentary *Eve of St. Mark* and other shorter poems.

Like his friend Leigh Hunt, Keats turned instinctively away from the northern to the southern Gothic ; from rough border minstrelsy to the mythology and romance of the races that dwelt about the midland sea. The middle ages were famous for their artistic tastes. The barons led a gorgeous splendid life. They were given to feasting, dancing and all other merry-making. Madeline's father also celebrated the Eve of St. Agnes with great pomp and show :

> A casement high and triple-arch'd there was
> All garlanded with carven imageries,
> Of fruits, and flowers and bunches of knot grass.
> And diamonded with panes of quaint davice,
> Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes.
> As are the tiger-moth's deep damask'd wings.

The quarrels and rivalries so prevalent in those ages are also reflected in Keats' poems. Medieval legends are frequently Keats' subject-matter. Medieval life with its chivalric spirit and love and romance is fully and frequently reflected in Keats' works, "But it is medievalism seen through the magical mist or the imagination of Keats." The poet's romantic imagination found its best expression in the medieval world.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci is a full revival of the medieval spirit and atmosphere. Medieval romance can be seen in the following line :

> She took me to her elf in grot
> And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,

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And there I shut her wild eyes
With kisses four.

The concrete images in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* suggest an atmosphere that is sad, sombre, chivalric and weird, in a word, medieval. The Middle Ages were remarkable for their pomp and pageantry. This pomp and pageantry can be seen in *The Eve of St. Agnes* :—

A casement high and triple.....arched there was
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits and flowers and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device.
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings.

The note of superstition so characteristic of medievalism is marked in the *Eve of St. Agnes* again. The virgins are made to believe that their lovers come to adore them upon St. Agnes Eve. Further more, we have 'charmed magic casements' in the *Ode to a Nightingale*. It is in this poem again that we are reminded of the shadowy enchanter's castle in a kingdom by the sea, the lonely tower of which encloses an imprisoned princess, held in duress, and when the rich full note of the nightingale breaks upon her captive ear, she opens her window to listen and to look out over the wild waves for the ship that shall bring the knight of her deliverance.

"In all these poems", says Compton-Rickett, "medievalism serves as the inspiration and though it gave him ample opportunities for that richness of colouring that was at once his merit and his failing, it did not appeal to the strongest side of his nature. On two occasions by some happy chance, it inspires him in high vein that is, in his ballad *La Belle* and *Ode to a Nightingale*."

Q. 4. Write a note on Keats' Poetic Development.

(Agra University, M. A , 1968)

Ans. (For the answer to his question, Please see General Introduction, 3, of this book).

Q. 5. Write a note on Hellenism in Keats' poetry.

(Agra University, M. A., 1970)

Ans. Keats is rightly regarded as a Hellenist. Tormented by his miserable and charmless life, he was ever eager for an imaginative escape from the hard realities of the world into the "realms of gold." He found these "realms of gold" in abundance in Greek mythologa and medieval romance. That is why these myths and legends hady special fascination for him and he had a deep mental affinity for the hellenic. Prof. Selincourt writes : "There was much indeed in the Greek attitude to life, as he (Keat) understood it, that made an effective appeal to him." He had little of the scholar's training in the classical language. All his knowledge of Greek literature and myths was mostly derived from his study of the English translation of Homer

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and other Greek myths, and Lemprier's Classical Dictionary, and of Elgin-Marbles introduced to him in the British Museum by his artist friends, Haydon and Severn. Thus, he had become acquainted with the whole pantheon of gods and goddesses in his early boyhood. But he never studied Greek philosophy, life and culture. Hence he had no understanding of the more serious side of Greek life and culture. But even if he had not studied the English translation of Greek literature and mythology, he possessed an intuitive understanding of the true spirit of these ancient myths, and like Shakespeare, could enter into the spirit of antiquity. Prof. Jebb rightly says that Keats's "natural affinity with a Greek mind was certainly surprising for a London-born son of a livery stable-keeper." Indeed not only in his art classic, his very temper is Greek. Once Shelley called him "a Greek," and Keats's own friend, Hunt, remarked about him, "He never saw an oak without seeing a Dryad in it."

For Keats' Hellenic spirit the following points should be borne in mind :

(1) There is first, the frequent evidences of his quick and accurate intutions and passionate ardour for every kind of beauty. We see these in his frequent references to Greek myths and allusions for the sake of conjuring up beautiful vision of the classic poet.

(2) Again, we see his hellenism in his peculiar attitude to nature, especially "in his vivid sense of the joyous and multitudinous life of nature ; and in dreaming of the powers of nature as embodied in concrete shapes of supernatural human activity and grace." In other words, his Greek conception of the life and nature as the incarnation in forms human, but of more than human loveliness made the pagan creed, outworn to Wordsworth, to Keats it had freshness and vitality. He establishes a kind of hellenistic relationship between the beauties of nature and human emotions which is certainly not a philosophical or metaphysical relationship. He invests the objects of nature as it were, with an emotional force, which reflects a particular human emotion of the moment. Just as he expresses his feeling for nature in the language by which he would express a human emotion, so also the beauty of nature in his unfailing means for the expression of the deepest and the subtlest emotion of the human soul. In that lies the secret of the spell whieh Greek mythology exercised upon him, so far as his attitude to nature is concerned. In a world like the Greeks, he personifies the familiar objects of nature and by investing them with human familiar objects of nature and by investing them with human emotions, obtains a subtle means for reflecting some human mood at a particular moment. This is just an artistic device for enhancing the beauty of nature by giving it a human touch, and thereby imparting a greater force to the human emotion of the moment. A very good instance of this humanising of nature is seen in the various personifications of autumn in the second stanza of personified,

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but abstraction like melancholy and indolence in his odes these subjects are invested with human nature and his attention to the minutest accuracy of detail and clearcut outlines, which are closely associated with his desire to personify nature, his love of presenting beauty in concrete or objective forms are essentailly Greek devices.

(3) Another hellenic element is evident in the plastic quality of his imagination. This he imbibed from his study of Elgin Marbles and Spenser. Shelley disembodies the ideas, but Keats embodies them, and models them into concrete shapes. He is a master of status-que effect, which he achieves by his accuracy of detail and clear-cut outlines. He has no rival in this art among his contemporaries.

(4) Lastly in his enjoyment of the moment, in his delight in the unlimited joys of this life he is truly hellenic, as in the 'Ode to Autumn'.

To this extent Keats may be called a Greek, but no further. In respect of his aims and his gifts and his workmanship, he is essentially romantic Gothic English. Even in his attitude to his subject and presentation of it he is, as a rule, far different from the Greeks.' It was more through his kinship, both in spirit and taste, with the Elizabethans that he imbibed the hellenistic qualities. But in his inner artistic being he is more of an Elizabethan than of a Greek. His 'Endymion' and 'Lamia' have Greek themes treated in a pure romantic manner. It is not in these, but in 'Eve of St. Agnes', 'Isabella', and 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' which are thoroughly medieval and romantic, both in theme and execution, that he fully realised himself. His inner fibre was more purely romantic than Greek. In this last poem, he seems to have reached the culmination of his powers, and taken Romantic expression to its highest. In his odes, however, Keats surprises us by his equally great accomplishment as an interpreter of the Greek spirit and art in his mastery of clear-cut and simple outline, of the principle of unity, and the magical felicity, 'simplicity and economy' of expression. In these, he comes very near to the greatest of classical poets. But the economy of expression co-existing with the richness of imagery and suggestion shows a remarkable fusion of the two elements, Greek and romantic, which run parallel to each other in Keats's work in complete harmony, and without telling against each other.

Q. 6. Compare and contrast the romanticism of Shelly and Keats. (Rajasthan University, M. A., 1963)

Or

Compare and contrast Shelley and Keats as poets of the poetry of the Romantic Revival.

Shelley and Keats as man

Ans. Shelley was born as a rich man. He was free from the cares and worries of life which was a chronic disease in case of Keats.

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Keats was born in a poor family. He could not receive University education owing to financial difficulties. He grew a sober and melancholy youth a characteristic which greatly influenced his literary works. Though Shelley and Keats were contemporary poets yet they were not close friends. There was no personal contact between the two. Although Shelley wrote "Adonais" on the death of Keats yet it was merely a result of poetic inspiration rather than of personal sympathy and love. Thus, we notice that Shelley and Keats were not only temperamentally quite different, they had little acquaintance with each other.

Shelley and Keats as Thinkers

Shelley and Keats were quite different as thinkers. Shelley was an idealist and abstract thinker. He was a revolutionary and ardent champion of democracy and liberty and had a stronger interest in politics. But Keats was neither a rebel nor a utopian dreamer. He was purely an artist and a lover of beauty. He took no interest in politics. He had no sympathy with Shelley's humanitarian zeal and passion for reforming the world. To him "Truth is beauty and beauty is Truth". If so, why bother about politics and phliosophy ? By nature he was sore and melancholy and therefore the world seemed to him to be hard, cold and prosaic. He, therefore, habitually sought an imaginative escape from it, not like Shelley into the future land of promise but into the past of Greek mythology, as in 'Endymion,' 'Lamia' or of medieval romances as in 'St. Agnes', 'Isabella', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

Shelley and Keats as Poets

Shelley's conception of poetry was quite different from Keats's. Shelley treated poetry as a medium of spreading his prophetic utterances to the world. He considered it to be a part of his poetic mission to become the inspirer and guide of men. His passion for reforming the world blazes out again in his poetry. But according to Keats's conception of poetry, it should not be the vehicle of philosophy, religious teaching or social and political theories, but the incarnation of beauty. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" strikes the keynote of his literary works. With him poetry breaks away from the interests of contemporary life, returns to the past and devotes itself to the service of Beauty.

(*i*) *As Poets of Nature*

Both Shelly and Keats were ardent lovers of nature, but their views and appreciation of nature were quite different. Keats was a pictorial artist and a lover of concrete beauty of nature. He was an aesthetician in the simple and real beauty of nature. But Shelley was an idealist ethereal dreamer and loved "reflecled glory"—in nature and sought a philosophic lesson on the face of nature. Keats loved nature just for its own sake and for the glory and loveliness which he everywhere found in it. There was nothing mystical in his love of

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nature. Like Shelley he sought no spiritual message and meaning in the phenomenon of nature. He declared "I have loved the principle of beauty in all things". The smallest flowers and the pettiest aspects of nature attracted him. In contrast to this Shelley was a lover of the dynamic aspects of nature. He loved wild storms, furious seas and swift flowing rivers. Like Shelley, Keats was not scientific in his study of nature.

(ii) As Poets of Men

Keats was interested in men as men. He was quite near to the simple "poetry of earth". He was a realist and was deeply grieved by the sufferings of humanity. But Shelley was a dreamer and treated men as ideals. His men stand as symbols—sometimes as the symbols of "the spirit of poetry" and sometimes of the revolutionary spirit. "Prometheus" stands for an ideal deliverer of man-kind and Titan stands as the prototype of mankind in its long struggle against miseries. But in Keats's poetry Porphero or Isabella are mere human beings of flesh and blood. Keats had greater hold on reality while Shelley was a philosophic dreamer.

(iii) As Poets of Medeivalism and Hellenism

Quite in contrast to Shelley, Keats was a lover of the Middle Ages. He took a keen interest in the arts, decorations, superstitions and heroic deeds of those ages. 'La Belle Dame Sans Mercy', 'Isabella' and 'St. Agnes' are medieval poems. But Shelley never turned to the past, he always looked to the future. However, both Shelly and Keats are Hellenists. Keats was interested in ancient Greece and interpreted it in contemporary spirit. Both of these poets are myth-makers. But whereas Shelley makes myths from daynamic aspects of nature, Keast forms them from constant and calmer ones.

(iv) Shelley and Keats as Artists

Shelley and Keats were both great artists. Shelley was lyrical while Keats was artistic ; Shelley's style is marked with haste and restlessness while Keats' style is slow, quiet and smooth-flowing. Keats is a lover of concrete beauty while Shelley is abstract and visionary. Keats's style is somewhat traditional and influenced by other poets like Shakespeare and Milton. But Shelley is quite original. On the whole, Keats is a greater artist than Shelley.

Q. 7. Write a note on Keats's Imagery.

Or

Discuss with illustrations Keats's Imagery.

Ans. The term 'imagery' is used in two senses. First, in the sense of a metaphor, and secondly as the expression of sense-experience, chanelled through sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste ; through these channels impressed upon the mind. In the phrase of Bliss Perry, imagery conveys the sense of things rather than the

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knowledge of things. According to Edith Kickert, "It is a mode of expressing experience in the form of mental pictures." T. E. Hulme, the father of Imagism, remarks that "Images in verse are the very essence of an intuitive language."

The principle of poetic imagery lies in comparison of object and object, of concept and concept, of object and concept. The last process illuminates the abstract by means of the concrete, explains the material by an abstraction, and an abstraction by a concept. Comparison fuses and confuses the perceptions of the senses, finding analogies between their different modes of action.

Keats' poetry, says Prof. C. L. Finney, "is not only rich in line, colour, light and shade, and sound but it is also rich in images of the intimately physical sensations of taste, touch, smell, temperature, and pressuret and in images of the organic sensations, such as hunger and thirst...thus his imagery is both sensuous and comprehensive."

As regards imagery, Keats is different from Shelley. Keats is earthly and arboreal while Shelley is aerial and ethereal ; the former fixes his gaze on the objects in all their varieties, but the latter either penetrates into the heart of things or tries to grasp thin substances like light, air, fire, fog and airy nothings. Keats's imagery is organic, rounded and statuesque ; here every thing is solid and tangible, but Shelley has no sense of the body and his poetry is replete with airy forms, glittering phantoms or geometrical shapes, figures and structures. Keats' objects are generally in repose, a state of momentary suspension of life and motion and if there is any movement at all it is slow and gradual. But Shelley is a poet of impetuous speed and his lines and words, even the things in nature are always on the run. Keats' surface is smooth and velvety ; Shelley's rugged and jagged.

A remarkable feature of *Keats' sensuous imagery* is the fusion of different sensations and a subordination of other sensations of those of touch and taste. His images are solid, rounded and intense. Touching with dazzled lips her starlit hands, incense-pillowed every summer night ; let the rose glow intense and warm in the air ; she writh'd about, convuls'd with pain ; taste the music of that vision pale ; mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed, etc. are only a few examples.

His visual imagery is then product of an eye usually directed to particulars of things close at hand. The visual interest lies mainly in a motionless and statuseque tableau. In the *Grecian Ode*, the youth for ever about to kiss ; the maiden for ever young and beautiful, etc., illustrate this point. The essential quality of *Autumn* is fixed in a motionless, eternal moment. The evening clouds are stopped.

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;

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Keats reinforces the sense of the eye by the sense of touch. Example of his *tactual imagery* can be cited from his famous odes. The complete realization of warm, breathing flesh in his description in the *Ode to Psyche* of Cupid, and Psyche is achieved by a concentration of tactual images. In The *Grecian Ode*—the nude pursuit and struggle to escape has a sensation of warmth. His images of heat suggest a mellow, genial warmth.

The *auditory images* of Keats are often soft, Keats has sounds so faint that they barely rise above silence. Soft humming and buzzing noises are frequent in his poems. In the *Nightingale* the murmurous haunt of flies blends with the quite of summer evening. The final stanza of *Autumn* renders more completely the smooth, full harmony of his sound-instrument.

Then we have *gustatory* and *ogranic images*, His love of wine—*Nightingale* (11-18), *Melancholy* (27-28), *St. Agnes* (226-227), and also his use of 'honey' exemplifies the lingering, luxurious sensuousness of his gustatory images. As regards the organic imagery, Keats is massive, smooth and almost slumberous. For example, the first stanza of *Nightingale* is a glaring example of the organic effects. The words like *numbness, drunk, some dull one* and *sunk* etc. overpower the reader. The same effect is present in his *Melancholy*.

Keats thus is a great pictorial artist. His pictures are vivid and accurate. His images are concrete and complete. Mostly they are functional ; they are not an unnecessary embellishment, by the very essence of his poetry. It is they which increase the intensity and beauty of his poetry.

The realm of operation of Keats's poetic fancy is the realm of sensations. Perceptions, thought, memories, etc. come only after sensations ; and these he does not prefer. He prefers sensations. His poetry, except in *Hyperion*, is devoid of elaborate similes (as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*) as weli as of compressed similes or metaphors (of which Shakespeare remains the supreme craftsman). His images are more of directly descriptive rather than illustrative nature. He has given us description-images ; the illustrative-illuminative images are rare in his poetry.

According to Cloude Lee Finney. "The imagery of Keats's poetry has two notable characteristics. In the first place, it is comprehensive, having images of all the sensations of the sensuory system —sensations of sight, hearing, touch, temperature, pressure, taste, smell, motor sensations, hunger, thirst, lust, etc. In the second place, it is sensuous being rich in images of the intimately physical sensations of touch, temperature, pressure, taste, smell, and the internal sensations.'

According to Fogle, Keats' imagery is synaesthetic. Fogle observes : "He (Keats) has at his command an unexampled abundance of vivid sensory images. Therefore he slips readily from one

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order of sensuory images. Therefore he slips readily from one order of sensation to another when it suits his poetic purpose, like a master improvisor who transposes his theme into a different key. Strong sensation is thus made to reinforce weak by his unusually powerful faculty of association ; and odorimage may in a flash of associational intuition be transformed into an image of weight, or a sound-image tale on the added sense of touch. Furthermore, synaesthesia is usually fusional and swift in action, and Keats's poetry is fusional and compact in the highest degree, the more so as it gains in maturity....."

Here is an example of synaesthetic imagery from *Endymion :*

".....Here is wine,
Alive with sparkle—never, I over,
Since Ariadne was a vintager,
So cool a purple....."

This is an example of compression through synaesthesia for sharper poetic effect ; in the first place, "purple" is a sort of metaphor for "wine" ; in the second place, the visual sensation of the colour of wine blends synaesthetically with the immediately cooling effect of drinking wine, the tactual sensation. Hence the last line of the above passage is an example of double compression. On certain occassions taste, sound and sight get unconsciously bound together in one synaesthetic image, e.g.

".....turn turn to the very tale,
And taste the music of that vision pale."

The great Odes of Keats are very much replete with synasthetic images, because each of them is a model of compression of vast poetic experience. One encounters them in each stanza, and they contribute a great deal to the dramatic intensity of the great *odes*.

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ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. It has been said that Keats's development marks a drift from romantic egocentricity towards objectivity. Basing your answer on "Endymion", "Hyperion" and the "Odes", offer your views of Keats's development.

2. Write a critical note on Keats's poetic development.

3. Give an account of the development of Keats's mind and art from "Endymion" to Hyperion".

4. What qualities of poetry would you associate with the term 'Keatism' ? Answer with reference to some poems of Keats that you know.

5. Discuss the true nature of the appeal of Keats in the light of the remark that he is a 'sensuous mystic'.

6. Keats longed 'for a life of associations rather than of thoughts'. Show in what way his poems are a fulfilment of this longing.

7. 'Of the romantic poets Keats alone was exclusively a poet.' Discuss.

8. 'With a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, and rather obliterates all other considerations.' Relate this remark of Keats to his own work.

9. "Poetry, as it came to him (Keats) was not a spiritual vision, as with Wordsworth, but a joy wrought out of sensation." Discuss fully.

10. Write a short note on Keats's Hellenism.

11. What are the notable features of Keats' handling of Greek legends ?

12. "Keats was a Greek." Do you agree with this remark ?

13. Write an essy on the classical element in Keats' poetry.

14. Shelley said of Keats : "He is a Greek." Analyse the statement with reference to Keats' poems you have studied.

15. Write an essay on the medieval note in the poetry of Keats.

16. Show that "Keats achieves a rare combination of classicism with romanticism."

17. What aspects of Medieval life have been painted by Keats in his poetry ? Is it correct to say that his picture is partial and one-sided ?

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18. Write a short essay on the pictorial quality of Keats, giving illustrations from the poems that you have read.

19. Analyse the distinctive features of Keats's imagery. Give illustrations from the prescribed poems you have studied.

20. How far do you think is "Endymion" a characteristic work of Keats ? Give illustrations.

21. Would you agree with the view that "Endymion" is a work of pure romance without any recognizable theme ? State reasons for your answer.

22. "Endymion' was Keats's first ambitious work ; but it was a significant failure." Analyse the statement with illustrations from the text.

23. "I have the same idea of all our passions as of love" wrote Keats in a letter. "……they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty." Discuss "Endymion" as a poem of love and beauty in the light of above statement.

24. It is said that "Hyperion" failed as epic because Keats lacked the epic imagination and could not work out a plan of action to express what he must have deeply believed. Do you agree ?

25. Keats grew dissatisfied with "Hyperion" and left it unfinished. Do you think "Keats's dissatisfaction was justified."

26. Do you think "Hyperion" would have been a success had not Keats imitated Milton too consciously ? Give adequate reasons for your answer.

27. Comment on the quality of Keats's achievement in the Odes in the light of the following observation : "These poems (the Odes) are different in kind from their predecessors ; while the earlier ones were decorative, these are tragic."

28. "Had Keats left us only his Odes, his rank among the poets would not be lower than what it is." Discuss the greatness of Keats's Odes in the light of this remark.

29. Show how Keats's Odes provide the most perfect example of his "Negative Capability."

30. Consider with reference to Keats's Odes : "The Aestheticism of Keats has also an intellectual side."

32. Consider with reference to Keats's Odes : "The most original character of this art is its density ; each epithet is extraordinarily rich in suggestion."

33. Show that in the Odes, Keats carries out the prescription for poetry which he gave to Shelley and loads every rift of subject with ore.

34. Write a critical note on the Odes of Keats.

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35. "The Odes of Keats show an equal balance of form and expression." Discuss.

36. The great odes of Keats stand alone in literature, new in form and spirit and owing noting to any predecessor. Elucidate.

37. "The Odes of Keats reflect his persistent endeavour for something beautiful and permanent in a transient world. Discuss and illustrate.

38. Consider the use of imaginative personification in Keats's odes.

39. Briefly explain and analyse how his odes represent the apex of Keats's poetic art.

40. Do you agree with the statement that the Odes of Keats are all of a piece, and the best way to understand them is to make them interpret each other ? Give reasons for your answer.

41. "The Ode, as the six great Odes illustrate it, develops with Keats, not from the Ode or Hymn of the eighteenth century but from a species the eighteenth century despised the sonnet." Discuss and amplify.

42. "Comparing his earlier poems with the Odes of Keats, a critic remarks that they (the Odes) are enlarged, complicated by a dimension of human experience, unknown to the former." Discuss the quality of the art of the Odes in the light of his view.

43. "Through the Odes (of Keats) there runs a troubled consideration of the relation of poetry to reality." Elucidate the statement giving illustrations from Keats's great odes.

44. "In the 'Ode to a Nightingale', Keats portrays a state of intense aesthetic, and imaginative feeling too poignant for long duration which arises with the song of a bird and vanishes when the song is done. The poet records his emotion and its passing without comment." Analyse and illustrate.

45. What do you consider the theme of the "Ode to a Nightingale" to be and how does Keats work it out ?

46. Elucidate the view that in the Nightingale and Grecian Urn odes, Keats feels not so much the joy of imaginative experience as the painful antithesis between transient sensation and enduring art.

47. How far does the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' provide a perception into reality ? Discuss fully with ample illustrations.

48. The main subject of the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is the ereative ecstasy which the artist perpetuates in a masterpiece." Do you find this an adequate statement of the 'meaning' of this Poem ?

49. Write a critical commentary on the structure of Keats's major odes.

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50. Would you agree with the view that Keat's artistic vision as embodied in the Odes is basically dramatic ?

51. Discuss the view that the Odes of Keats are incipient drama. Give illustrations in support of your argument.

52. Write an essay on Keats' treatment of Nature.

53. Compare Keats with Shelley and Wordsworth as poets of Nature.

54. "Where Wordsworth spiritualises and Shelley intellectualises Nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses." Elucidate.

55. "Write a note on the sensuousness of Keats.

56. "Keats is abundantly and enchantingly sensuous." Discuss.

57. Keats once wrote, "O for a life of sensation rather than of thought !" How far does his poetry bear out this statement ?

58. Is Keats merely a poet of the senses and nothing more ? Give reasons for your answer.

59. "An all comprehensive love of Beauty is the distinguishing note of Keats' poetry." Discuss.

60. Write a note on Keats' love of Beauty.

61. With the passing of time, Keat's aestheticism takes an intellectual and spiritual turn. Discuss.

62. "Beauty is Truth, truth Beauty." Amplify.

63. Enumerate the various stages in the evolution of Keats's love of beauty. Add suitable illustrations.

64. Write an essay on the Escapism of Keats.

65. Is Keats merely a sensuous poet and nothing more ? Add illustrations from the poems you have read.

66. "Hyperion" is an epic of revolution. Justify.

67. Write an essay on Keats as an artist.

68. What do you know of Keats' pictorial art ? Add illustrations.

69. "Load every rift of your subject with ore." Examine this advice of Keats to Shelley in the light of his own poetry.

70. "Keats's poetry represents both the beauty of form and beauty of substance." Elucidate.

71. Comment on the language, diction and versification of John Keats. What are his faults ?

72. Write a note on Keats as a romantic poet.

73. "In Keats's poetry romanticism attains the final stage of its progress." Discuss.

74. "Write a note on the union of classicism and romanticism in the poetry of Keats.

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75. In Keats' poetry, "Romanticism finds its balance." Elucidate.

76. Bring out the classical element in the poetry of Keats.

77. Shelley said, "Keats never was nor ever will be, a popular poet." Do you agree with this view ?

78. Give your own estimate of Keats's true place in the history of English poetry.

79. Write an essay on the merits and demerits of Keats's poetry.

80. Keats said, "my name is writ in water." Saintsbury modifies the statement and says, "his name is writ in water, but in the water of life.' Elucidate.

81. Write an eassy on the permanence of Keats.

82. Account for the universal popularity of Keats.

83. Write a note on Keats as a "pure poet."

84. Give your own estimate of Keats's Conception of Poetry.

85. What do you understand by 'Negative Capability' ? Add illustrative quotations.

86. What evidence do you find in the poety of Keats of his concern with the facts of life ?

87. Write an essay on Keats as a writer of Odes.

88. Show that the Odes of Keats bring out all the characteristic features of his poetry, as its best.

89. Estimate the significance of Keats in the history of the English ode writers.

90. "In the Ode on Melancholy and the Ode on Autumn, Keats returns to ordinary human experience and to the problem of human happiness in life." Discuss.

91. "The aestheticism of Keats has also an intellectual side." Discuss with suitable illustrations.

92. Write an essay on the chief features of the Great odes of Keats.

93. "The antithesis between the permanence of art and the fleeting nature of human life is the theme of the Odes." Justify.

94. What light do the odes throw on the art of John Keats ? What are their faults, if any ?

95. Write an esssay on Keats as story-teller.

96. "Hyperion" is the most magnificent product of Keats' maturity. Justify.

97. Show that there was a gradual maturing of Keats's narrative powers. Add illustrative quotations from the poems you have read.

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98. Estimate the influence of Milton on Keats.

99. Bring out the epic element in the 'Hyperion'.

100. Write an essay on the symbolic and the allegorical significance of 'The Hyperion',

101. How far would it be correct to say that Apollo is Keats himself.

102. Discuss Keats as a narrative poet.

103. Estimate the influence of Keats on the succeeding generations of poets.

104. Keats is a poets' poet ; he has coached more poets than any one else on side of Spenser. Do you agree ? Give reason for your answer.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

1795 Born at 24 Moorfields Pavement Row London, on October 31.

1803 Sent to Clark School at Enfield .

1804 Keats's father killed in a fall from a horse.

1810 Keats's mother dies (March). Hls grand mother, Alice Jennings arranges a trust fund for the Keats children with Richard Abbey as the trustee-guardian.

1811 Keats removed from school and apprenticed to Thomas Hammond on apothecary and surgeon, at the village of Edmonton north of London.

1814 Earlier poetry, written at the age of 18 or 19. Keats's grandmother dies in December.

1815 Keats enters Guy's Hospital (October) to study for position as apothecary and surgeon.

1816 Goes to Margaret on the coast to write. Returns to London, meets Leigh Hunt and Benjamin Robert Haydon and writes sonnet on *Champman's Homer*. Writes other poems in Winter.

1817 First volume of *Poems* appears (March). Goes to the Isle of Wight to begin Endymion, trabels. Meet Wordsworth, Lamb and others at Haydon's "Immortal Dinner."

1818 Begins new Shakespearean sonnets and writes *Isabella*. Begins *Hyperion* ; meets Fanny Brawne.

1819. Writes *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *The Eve of St. Mark*, his famous *Odes* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* ; writes first half of *Lamia* and part of *The Fall of Hyperion*. Writes with Brown the play *Otho the Great*. Finishes *Lamia* in September; falls ill ; engagement with Fanny takes place. Writes fragment of *King Stephen* and *The Cup and Bell*.

1820. Gravely ill ; sails for Italy with Severn. Arrives at Naples on October 31. Travels to Rome.

1821 Dies on February 23, and is buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome.

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